

(NOTE: I recommend that you print this document in its entirety and save it in your academic records for future reference. You might need it when transferring to another college, etc.)

SOC 256: Sex and Sexualities

Fall 2020 (online)

Bellevue College

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COURSE INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

Are all people clearly either “male” or “female?”

Why do women and men appear to think so differently about sex?

How has our thinking about sex, gender, and sexuality shifted in recent years?

Is sexual orientation learned?

Why does penis size seem so important to men and breast size so important to women?

Is there a sexual double standard for women and men?

Are prostitution, pornography, and the adult sex industry harmful to society?

If any or all of these questions interest you, then you are in the right place! Over the course of the quarter, we will explore these questions as well as many other fascinating topics pertaining to sex and sexuality. I look forward to working with you and sharing my enthusiasm for the sociology of sexuality. I have a passion for this subject matter, and I hope you will have a passion too. Welcome to our class!

This class is about sex. But it's not just about sex. It is also about gender, culture, and deviance. It is about the body. It's about power, politics, inequality, and social change. Sociologists know that sex does not happen in a vacuum (although that might be appealing to some people!). To the contrary, sex is tied up with history, culture, politics, and power. We will explore these connections over the next eleven weeks. *Our major goal is to understand how the larger social environment fundamentally shapes our intimate, private sex lives for better or worse.*

We live in a society where sex is everywhere – on television and radio, in movies and the arts, on bus stop billboards and, of course, the internet. We talk about sex at home, in school, on Capitol Hill, and at work. We call people studs, sluts, pimps, whores, players, and prudes. We hear about sex drives, sex scandals, sex toys, sex addicts, and sex slaves. Sex is all around us, touching nearly every aspect of our lives – yet we rarely take the time to study it. In fact, we are often misinformed about sex. This course is designed to untangle

sexual myths from sexual realities; thus, it focuses on the scientific study of sexuality. You will probably look at sex and sexuality in a very different way after taking this class.

As we all come to the course with strong ideas and beliefs about sexuality, the subject matter can be personally as well as intellectually challenging. Some of what you will learn in this course may initially seem like "common sense." Sometimes what you will learn might be shocking, surprising, or even make you angry. Nevertheless, I hope that you will learn from each class experience and take these lessons with you on your future endeavors.

“The chief object of education is not to learn things but to unlearn things.”

–Gilbert Chesterton

Check out our Program website, which is full of information about sociology courses, majoring in sociology, and advice about how to make the most out of College: <http://www.bellevuecollege.edu/sociology/> (Links to an external site.)

LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

I believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Thus, this is an *active, interactive* course where you will *learn by doing*. You are expected to observe the world, read, write, discuss, and participate. I think of our class as a “collaborative learning community” where we all teach and learn from each other. Every time you post a comment or ask a question, you are teaching something to the rest of us. In order to do well in this course, you will need to abandon the traditional "passive" student role and instead *take control of your learning and education*. I think you'll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process!

Regarding Safe Space: This class is a Safe Space for ***all*** students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer-identified, nonbinary, and transgender students are welcome in this class and are encouraged to speak out and be an integral part of this class. Any questions about what this means should be brought to me immediately. All are welcome!

A note about inclusion: Everyone in our class has the right to feel welcome and safe from personal attack, so with this in mind, I expect you to express yourself respectfully. When engaged in your role as a student, please be constructive in your comments. I will be constructive with mine. You may certainly disagree and debate, but you can express your viewpoint in an open, respectful manner. As a sociologist, I know that words do matter (they can hurt a lot!), so please think of other people's feelings before writing. I cannot allow students to insult or belittle an entire group of people (such as women, men, people of color, gays and lesbians, poor people, Christians, Jews, Muslims, disabled people, veterans, conservatives, liberals, and so on). You are entitled to your beliefs, but you are not entitled to make attacks or victimize others. It is unacceptable to justify bigoted attitudes for any reason, including religion. If you are unable to express your beliefs in a non-insulting manner, please keep them to yourself. I think you'll find, however, that with a little practice, you can express your viewpoint in an open, respectful manner. If you have any doubts, feel free to check with me and I'd be more than happy to help you express yourself responsibly. Hopefully, by the time you finish our class, you will be more appreciative of

and comfortable with human diversity and differences. Our differences are what make us wonderfully unique.

A note about online learning: As you know, all of Bellevue College is online this quarter. And unfortunately, online classes are not always a great “fit” for everyone. In general, online courses demand more independent initiative and personal discipline than do classes that meet on campus. Additionally, online classes demand stronger reading and writing skills. So, in order to make this quarter as successful for you as possible, you’ll want to follow these tips:

- Check the course website and course calendar around five days per week;
- Contact me if you don't understand something (but don't expect evening or weekend replies);
- Do your best to communicate clearly in writing (I don't grade on “grammar,” but you'll still want to be as clear and thorough as possible);
- Keep up with the readings, and highlight in the book as you read (even better, take notes on the readings!);
- Make sure you watch all the lectures; AND
- Turn in all of your assignments (even the “easy” ones and extra credit!).

A note about course content: Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we sometimes discuss provocative material in frank and open ways. Please be advised that this course includes mature, adult material. You might think of it as an "R-rated" class. However, when we explore adult or controversial topics, they will be framed within an academic context. This means that when we analyze or discuss them, we will do so professionally and with a learning goal in mind. So this means that I expect you to communicate with others in a professional, academic manner. If you have any questions or concerns about course content, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Additionally, since this course is a survey of the theories and research that have come out of Sociology as a discipline, we will use the social categories that have been thoroughly researched. We will often refer to “women” and “men” in our class as well as the research data about “women” and “men.” Although these categories are clearly and obviously socially-constructed (and in fact limiting and restrictive), they do have very real and significant social meaning in our culture. Make no mistake about that. So because “women” and “men” are socially real categories that have real (and sometimes dire) consequences, we will refer to these categories often.

A note about instructor availability: I have noticed that, sometimes, students who enroll in online classes have unreasonable expectations about their Instructor's availability. Please be aware that I am not online 24-hours a day. You will rarely be able to reach me in the evenings or on the weekends. I am, obviously, an active member of this course, but I do my coursework during the week, during daytime business hours. *Thus, please do not send to me late-night or weekend emails expecting an immediate response.* On Mondays-Fridays, I aim to respond to emails within 24-hours. Please adjust your expectations accordingly. Thanks!

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing the course, students should be able to:

- Explain the difference between key concepts in the field, such as “sex,” “gender,” “sexuality,” and “sexual orientation”;
- Discuss how sexuality is socially constructed and compare norms and cultural perspectives on sexual behavior across societies;
- Describe the ways in which our culture and society shape our sexual opinions and experiences;
- Illustrate how gender influences sexual attitudes and behaviors;
- Better understand sexual practices and perspectives from a sociological perspective;
- Recognize how sex and sexualities are marketed, packaged and sold by society; and
- Critically examine how societies regulate sexual behavior.

REQUIRED TEXTS

“Sex Matters: The Sexuality and Society Reader” by Stompler, Baunach, Simonds, Windsor, and Burgess (5th Edition)

Additional readings are posted on the course website in the “Modules” tab. They are in electronic 'pdf' format.

A note about course readings: The readings in this course may be difficult for some students in that some of them are advanced. However, if you follow my reading tips, you will find the process much easier (and you’ll perform better on quizzes too). In this class, it’s very important to be an **active reader**. Have a purpose when you read! As you read, regularly ask yourself, “Am I getting it?” If not, go back and find the place where you last understood the material and re-read from that point forward. Also, you should **take notes as you read**. (These notes will help you for quizzes!) Try making an outline of the material by organizing the main ideas and supporting details. Or, write a brief summary of the main ideas. Or, make comments in the margins of your book. *You should always highlight or underline the main points as you read.* If you are having trouble concentrating, take a break and come back to the readings later. (It doesn’t do any good to “study” while you are not paying attention or focusing – in fact, it’s a waste of time!) Please know that I am available to assist you with any of the readings. My goal as an instructor is to help you succeed.

COURSE POLICIES

In order to have a respectful, cooperative learning environment in which we learn as much as possible from one other, we all need to contribute positively to our class dynamics. Although each class is unique and develops its own ‘personality,’ the following are the basic expectations that serve as the foundation of our class culture (yes, online classes have a culture too!).

The following outlines what we should expect of each other:

Preparation. All of us should prepare before participating. As your professor, my ultimate goal is to help you learn and succeed, so I will spend ample time and effort on

class preparation in order to make the material as understandable and as interesting as I possibly can. Sometimes we will have lectures to watch, and other times we'll have discussions, watch films, or complete activities/assignments. I am a big believer that learning in a variety of ways (not just lecture!) leads to deep and meaningful levels of understanding. As students, you should complete the readings before participating in discussion. And don't neglect the "smaller" assignments, because they count and add up easily, and so they are worth more in the end than they appear. When we all prepare, everyone benefits.

Quality. I believe that I have done my best to choose course materials and assignments that are interesting and engaging, and I'll bring my "best self" to our online class. I work hard to make this course a success for you, and I expect you to try hard too. When making comments and completing assignments, your comments should indicate that you have read and understand the course material. You should always try to do your personal best. Please don't assume that you can simply "wing it" in this class and still earn a high grade. I have high expectations of you, as I want you to succeed. I know you can succeed, even if you've never gone to college before or if you haven't done well in school or if you haven't taken an online class before! I hope you have high expectations of me as well.

Promptness. I will post assignments with plenty of time for you to complete them, and I commit to returning your work to you in a timely, reasonable fashion. I will respond to your questions and electronic communications as promptly as possible. As far as your assignments, be sure that you comply with all due dates. I believe that one of the major lessons students take away from college is the importance of meeting deadlines. As a result, **I do not accept late work.** I do accept work early, so if you want to work ahead a few days, that's totally fine. Due dates are indicated in the Canvas Calendar and in the Modules, so plan ahead.

Engagement. On your end, I need you to be engaged because the success of our class depends as much on you as on me. I expect you to actively engage with the course materials, participating and being involved as much as you possibly can. On my end, I agree to be available to you should you desire help. I encourage you to email me if you have a question or concern, and I encourage you to advocate for your own needs. If you want to talk via Zoom or Microsoft Teams, we can schedule an appointment that fits your schedule. However, please be aware that I am not available 24-hours a day, 7 days a week. I do my coursework during regular business hours. Thus, please do not send to me late-night or weekend emails expecting an immediate response. Thank you in advance for your understanding and consideration.

Honesty and integrity. Your grade will be based upon what I detect that you have learned, so it is your job to show me that you understand the material. This is very important: if you cheat/plagiarize, you will fail. No excuses will be taken into account. Your work must be your own, except when asked to work with other students. Furthermore, you are required to acknowledge in your papers if you have borrowed any ideas, terms, or phrases, even if you have borrowed from a classmate OR from the book. Please do not copy and paste material from wikipedia or any other website into your assignments, as this is a severe form of cheating (that is very easy to catch, by the way). If you cheat/plagiarize on any portion of a quiz or assignment, you'll receive a zero grade for the entire quiz/assignment. In this class, your assignments should be grounded **ONLY** in the book and course materials that are found in the Modules (rather than web resources, which are often wrong). This means that you should **NOT** do internet research in this class – all you need is in the course textbook. In fact, if you do outside research in this class, you

will lose points. I dock points for this because: (a) information on the Internet is often misleading and/or inaccurate and (b) I need to make sure that you understand OUR BOOK (which is, after all, sociological, and the research cited in it is solid, reliable social science!). If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask me.

Respect and inclusion. Since learning about diverse experiences is important in this course, it is of the utmost importance that we respect each other's experiences, differences, and opinions. I will do everything within my power to encourage a class culture that is free of prejudice and discrimination. I value you.

A note about religious holidays: If you expect to miss class, exams, or any other assignments as a consequence of your religious observance, you will be provided with a reasonable alternative opportunity to complete the work, as long as you notify me in advance. It is your responsibility to provide me with reasonable notice of the dates of religious holidays on which you will be absent. Alternatively, if you prefer, although I don't require it, you can request an official accommodation from the Student Affairs office if you will be absent from course activities due to religion or conscience (use this Request Form for the formal request). These formal requests for accommodation must be made within the first two weeks of the course to the office of the Associate Vice President of Student Affairs (see Bellevue College Policy 2950). In the event you feel you are being discriminated against based on faith or conscious, you may refer to the procedures outlined in the college's Discrimination, Harassment and Retaliation Policy (1440P).

GRADING

Final course grades are based on the following point breakdown:

Quizzes (10 @ 40pts each)	400 points
Discussion participation (10 @ 20pts each)	200 points
Essays (4 @ 40pts each)	160 points
Lecture notes (10 @ 10 points each)	100 points
Fieldwork Paper	140 points
TOTAL	1000 points

EXTRA CREDIT: You will have a handful of opportunities to earn Extra Credit this quarter. Extra Credit opportunities can be found in the weekly "Modules." I highly recommend that you take every opportunity to earn all the extra credit in this course that you can, as sometimes students struggle on the quizzes or forget to submit an assignment. *Extra credit gives you some 'wiggle room' to work with!*

When it is time for me to assign a letter grade to your overall course work, I use the following letter-grade equivalents:

A = 930-1,000 points

A- = 900-929 points

B+ = 870-899 points

B = 830-869 points

B- = 800-829 points

C+ = 770-799 points

C = 730-769 points

C- = 700-729 points

D+ = 670-699 points

D = 600-669 points

F = 0-599 points

The following is a description of the course grade components:

(1) **Quizzes:** You will take a quiz on Canvas every week. Quizzes will likely consist of multiple choice and/or short answer questions. I do not give make-up quizzes, and so you must complete them before the deadline. Quizzes will cover all of the content from that week (they are not cumulative) – readings, lectures, videos, etc., so be sure that you take the quizzes after you've done the rest of the work for that week.

(2) **Essays:** You will complete four essays throughout the quarter that require you to reflect on the course material and/or observe the social world. You should do your best to address every essay question thoughtfully, clearly, and completely. These assignments will be graded not only on their completeness (Did you adequately address all the components of the assignment?), but also on their thoughtfulness (Does your essay show that you understand and thought hard about the course material/readings? Do you connect your answer to the course materials?). PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT THESE ESSAYS WITHOUT FIRST READING THE BOOK and WATCHING THE LECTURES - I will definitely be able to tell if you are "shooting from the hip" rather than relying on what you've read to help you with the assignment. And again, PLEASE DO NOT DO "INTERNET RESEARCH" FOR THESE ESSAYS – you should rely solely on the course materials (if you rely on other sources, your grade will suffer as I need to ensure that you understand the book, which is far more reliable than much of the Internet). Essays vary in length - most are roughly 500 words. Please note that I will not accept late essays. Don't wait until the night they are due. Plan ahead.

(3) **Lecture Notes:** You will watch weekly lectures on Canvas and take notes while you watch. You'll submit these notes for a grade. NOTE: this should be an "easy" way to earn full or close-to-full points so don't pass up these assignments! All you need to do is demonstrate to me that you watched and understand the important points from lecture. Be thorough in your notetaking. You can use these notes on the quizzes!

(4) **Fieldwork Paper:** You are required to complete **ONE** fieldwork assignment of your choice. Fieldwork assignments require you to observe some aspect of the social world and write a paper linking your observations to the course material. Descriptions of the Fieldwork Papers can be found under the "Modules" link on the lefthand side of the page. Please note that **I will not accept late work**, so plan ahead. Specific information about paper format, including citation style, can be found in the Fieldwork Assignments themselves.

(5) **Discussion:** Each week, you will participate in large class discussions. It is your responsibility, as a member of our class, to respond thoughtfully not only to my prompt(s), but also to your classmates' comments. You are required to participate thoroughly in each week's discussion(s), as your grade will be based on the quality of your contributions and your level of involvement. You have **two due dates every week for discussion – you must make your first post on the discussion board by Wednesday (11:59pm) each week, and then at least two additional posts by Sunday (11:59pm) each week.** So, in order to receive high grades on your discussion, you will need to:

(a) make an initial post in which you rely upon the readings and videos, demonstrating to me that you know the material, and;

(b) respond to AT LEAST 2 of your classmates' posts throughout the week (i.e. contribute something intellectually meaningful).

In other words, you will need to make a TOTAL of at least 3 **high-quality** posts each week. I have set up the weekly discussions so that you cannot see what others have posted until you've made your own initial post first.

I recommend that you **check the discussion board almost daily, including the morning the discussion closes.** By checking the discussion board frequently, you will be able to look for opportunities where you can add more to the conversation (thus improving your grade!). This will also improve your learning. The following are guidelines that you should follow in order to contribute to successful class discussions:

Your responses to my discussion questions should be in sentence/paragraph format, and you should avoid what I call "text message" grammar (that means no "u" instead of "you"). While format is always important (since it eases communication), the focus in this class is primarily on content. Therefore, your comments should be meaningful and expand your classmates' understanding of the topic. The goal for our discussions is to deepen our understanding of the course themes.

On each discussion thread, you can earn up to twenty points for your contributions. Your posts must reflect real thought and deepen the conversation. Therefore keep the following in mind:

- Say something that will *contribute* to a *meaningful* discussion--this requires *time and thought!* Thoroughly reflect on and think about the point you are making.
- Fully explain and elaborate your points, using examples, evidence and logic to explain. Rely on evidence whenever possible, as this course is a social science course, and you are learning the social science perspective. Speak with precision regarding your meaning, rather than being vague or general.
- Respond to the topic, not the author. This does not mean you should ignore the person who wrote the original post, but it means you need to focus on the ideas in the post and

how to further the conversation on the topic, not tell the author what you think of his or her post.

- Place your reaction in the context of the discussion. Make sure that you clearly connect your response to the week's (or previous weeks') themes.
- Minimize prejudices, biases, unfounded beliefs, and too much reliance on emotional reactions, which can sidetrack good sound judgment and opinions rooted in your learning and in the sociological perspective. It is easy for bias, belief and emotion to dominate a discussion because we have existing emotions around the topic at hand, or because we fall prey to "reductionism" (seeing individuals as causes of their predicaments, which have social roots and solutions).
- Feel free to be personal and interpersonal on the threads, in addition to substantive discussion. This aspect of discussion helps the group bond as a community. Remember, too, that you will apply many of the topics to your own social worlds. Be careful, however, not to go WAY off on a personal tangent--stay focused on the topic. If you want to carry on a more personal discussion, use the "other" forum on the discussion site. The assignment forums are reserved for analyzing the assignment of the week.

Examples of good discussion posts include: clarifying or expanding the relevant concept if important points are missing, vague or incorrect; looking at the issue from another angle or perspective; adding pertinent information; asking a question that forces your classmates to think more in depth on the topic.

I'm looking forward to an engaging and interesting discussion board!

The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which you have documentation or have seen someone for treatment and if you feel you may need accommodations in order to be successful in college, please contact us as soon as possible. If you are a student with a documented autism spectrum disorder, there is a program of support available to you. If you are a person who requires assistance in case of an emergency situation, such as a fire, earthquake, etc, please meet with your individual instructors to develop a safety plan within the first week of the quarter. The DRC office is located in B 132 or you can call them at 425.564.2498. Deaf students can reach them by video phone at 425-440-2025 or by TTY at 425-564-4110. Please visit our website for application information into our program and other helpful links at www.bellevuecollege.edu/drc (Links to an external site.)

College Anti-Discrimination Statement (Title IX)

Bellevue College does not discriminate on the basis of race or ethnicity; color; creed; national origin; sex; marital status; sexual orientation; age; religion; genetic information; the presence of any sensory, mental, or physical disability; gender identity or veteran status in educational programs and activities which it operates.

For further information and contacts, please consult [College Anti-Discrimination Statements \(Links to an external site.\)](#).

