

SOC 256: SEX AND SEXUALITIES

Fall 2015
Bellevue College



Image is a modification of Gran Fury's "Kissing Doesn't Kill"

Instructor: Denise Johnson

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(Note: when emailing, please put "SOC 256" in the subject line)

Office Phone: (425) 564-5143

Office Hours: 10:30am-11:20am daily (please let me know in advance if you plan to come by, as I often have appointments with students during this time)

Office Location: A100D

Class meets: Daily 12:30pm-1:20pm

Class Location: A206

COURSE INTRODUCTION

- Are all people clearly either "male" or "female?"
- Why do women and men appear to think so differently about sex?
- 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 magazine advertisements. We talk about sex at home, in school, on Capitol Hill, and at work. We call people studs, sluts, pimps, whores, 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.

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/>

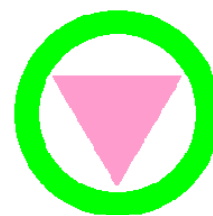
LEARNING ATMOSPHERE

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 are expected to 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 make a comment or ask a question, you teach something to the rest of us. I challenge you to abandon the traditional passive student role and to get involved with teaching and learning – I think you’ll enjoy it and learn a lot in the process!

(Please note that since this is a class about sex and sexuality, we will have frank discussions about potentially sensitive and explicit topics. 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 with a learning goal in mind. So this means that I expect you to communicate with others in a professional, academic manner. If at any time you feel uncomfortable during class, you are free to step out of class. However, if you are one to become upset by open and frank discussions about sex, this course may not be a good choice for you. **This is undoubtedly an “R” rated class.**) 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.

Regarding Safe Space: This class is a Safe Space for all students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer-identified, and transgendered students are welcome in classroom and encouraged to speak out and be an integral part of this class. A critical understanding and the embracing of alternative genders and sexualities in classroom is encouraged. Any questions about what this means should be brought me immediately. All are welcome!



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A note about inclusion: Everyone is welcome in this class and is encouraged to be an equal part of our class culture. However, bigoted comments and attitudes will not be tolerated. This means that insulting, belittling, degrading, or castigating a group of people (such as women, men, people of color, gays and lesbians, poor people, Christians, Jews, Muslims, veterans, and so on) will not be permitted. You are entitled to your beliefs,

of course, but you are not entitled to make other people feel attacked, insulted, or victimized. It is also unacceptable in this class to 'justify' bigoted attitudes for any reason, including religion. As a sociologist, I know that words do matter (they can hurt a lot!), so please think of other people's feelings before speaking. 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 happy to help you express yourself responsibly.

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing the course, the successful student will 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 AND MISCELLANEOUS PURCHASES

Texts: Sex Matters: The Sexuality and Society Reader (4th edition)
Additional readings are posted on CANVAS

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

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 classroom 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.

The following outlines what you may expect of me as your instructor:

- *A sincere effort to help you learn the course material.* Since my ultimate goal is to help you learn and succeed, I intend to spend enough time and effort on class preparation to make the material as understandable and as interesting as I possibly can. I will not simply “regurgitate” the material from the book, but rather, I will help you synthesize it. This means that class time will not be solely lecture – we will have interesting discussions, watch films, and engage in a wide variety of activities. I am a big believer that a variety of teaching styles/approaches helps you learn more.
- *Accessibility.* I agree to be available to you outside of class should you desire help. I encourage you to come to my office hours when you have a question or concern. I am more than happy to help. If my office hours are not convenient for you, 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. In general, I am in

my office for a couple of hours in the morning (before my classes), and I always check my email a few times a day. I do my coursework during the week, during daytime business hours as much as possible. *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. **(NOTE: I will award you 10 extra credit points if you come to my office hours at any time before the end of the quarter.** Maybe we can talk about how you're doing in class, a challenging topic, or your future academic plans.)

- *Attention.* When you are speaking, you will have my undivided attention. I will never make you feel "stupid" or less intelligent for asking a question or making a comment. I will treat you as a multi-dimensional human being with feelings and a unique personal background. You are not a student identification number to me!
- *Fairness.* Your grade will be based upon what I detect that you have learned and how I assess your performance. It is your job to clearly communicate to me that you understand the material. I will not negotiate final grades.

The following outlines what I expect from you as a student in this class:

- *A sincere effort to learn the course material.* When participating in discussions and when writing assignments/papers, your comments should indicate to me that you have read and understand the course material. Some students wrongly assume that they can simply "wing it" in this class and still receive a high grade.
- *Preparation.* You should come to class having done the assigned readings and homework, and you should always bring the proper supplies with you. On seminar days, you should bring the readings. Note that the BC guideline for homework is two hours outside of class for each hour spent in class. (this means 10 hours of homework per week for a typical 5-credit class). Don't worry, though – the work load in this class is probably not going to come to 10 hours a week, although it's not a class that you can 'blow off.'
- *Attendance.* Please attend all class sessions – your presence in class contributes significantly toward your final grade in the course as I cover a lot of material in class that cannot be found in the readings. If you do need to miss class, please note that you will not be able to make up any in-class work that you may have missed (such as group work), and you are also responsible for any and all work that is due at the class meeting immediately upon your return. That means that being absent does not grant you an extension on anything. I highly recommend that you get the names and contact information of one or two of your classmates so you can contact them for any assignments or notes you may have missed while absent.
- *Promptness.* You should be in class on time except when delayed by an emergency, and you should stay until class is over unless you become ill or have made arrangements with me to leave early. Furthermore, you should 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, **no late work will be accepted.** Late work will receive a **zero** grade. Please do not ask me if I will accept your work late...I won't. If you know you are going to be absent on the day an assignment is due, then turn it in early. **Being absent on the day something is due does NOT grant you an automatic extension (even if**

you were absent on the day it was assigned). Major due dates are indicated on the attached Course Calendar, so plan ahead.

NOTE: I do not accept assignments via email. It is your responsibility to get the work to me in class when it is due.

- *Contribution.* Learning about each other’s experiences and perspectives is an integral part of the learning process in this course. I believe that you will learn a lot about yourself and your fellow classmates. To work effectively in this course, therefore, you are expected to be an active participant in our learning environment. You should do your best to contribute to class discussions and activities. Please be advised that your grade will be affected if you do not participate and contribute to the intellectual life of our class.
- *Respect and tolerance.* Since learning about diverse experiences is central to this course, it is of the utmost importance that you respect your classmates’ experiences, differences, and opinions. Disrespectful attitudes will not be tolerated.
- *Honesty.* This means no cheating, and no plagiarism. If you cheat/plagiarize, you 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. 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). ***In this class, your assignments should be grounded in the book (rather than web resources, which are often wrong!). This means that you should NOT do internet research in this class – all you need can be found in the course textbook and supplementary readings.*** If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask me.

GRADING

Grades are based on your performance on five factors: (1) quizzes, (2) exams, (3) seminar, (4) a group research project and presentation, and (6) class participation. Each of these elements is awarded a specific number of points:

Quizzes (9 @ 20 pts each)	180 points
Exams (2 @ 150 pts each)	300 points
Seminar (16 @ 15 pts each)	240 points
Group Research Project/Presentation	200 points
<u>Participation and HW</u>	<u>80 points</u>
TOTAL	1,000 points

The following are the letter-grade equivalents to the course points:

Course Grade	Point Total	Course Grade	Point Total
A	= 930-1,000 points	C+	= 770-799 points
A-	= 900-929 points	C	= 730-769 points
B+	= 870-899 points	C-	= 700-729 points
B	= 830-869 points	D+	= 670-699 points
B-	= 800-829 points	D	= 600-669 points
		F	= 0-599 points

The following is a brief description of each of the five components:

- (1) **Quizzes:** During most weeks, I will give a short quiz on the reading materials. You are permitted to miss one quiz without consequence to your grade (I drop the lowest score). Quizzes will typically be short answer, although I may throw in a multiple choice question once in a while. The purpose of these quizzes is to ensure that you have done the readings and understand them. My rationale for this is that I think our time in class will be much more productive, and you'll learn more, if you've done the readings ahead of time. Please note that **you cannot makeup missed quizzes**. Quizzes will be held at the beginning of class, so if you come in late, you will be expected to finish the quiz at the same time as the rest of the class.
- (2) **Exams:** Over the course of the quarter, you will take two exams that integrate the course's in-class activities (lectures, films, etc.) and readings. Exams are designed to make sure you understand important course concepts and themes. Exams might include multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and essay questions. Please note that **you cannot make up missed exams**. Exam dates are on the attached Course Calendar, so please plan ahead. Also please note that **I do not give early or late final exams, so please plan ahead**.
- (3) **Seminar:** We will have seventeen seminars over the course of the quarter, but only sixteen will count towards your grade in the class (I drop the lowest score). Seminar involves discussing a specific reading and completing a brief assignment independently **AND** another one in small groups in order to reach deeper levels of learning. During class on each seminar day, I will assign students randomly to groups. **Each individual group member must come to class with the following on a TYPED paper:**
 - A) A paragraph summary of the reading identifying main points, thesis of the reading, key terms, etc.
 - B) An interesting or provocative quote from the reading.
 - C) At least one statement of praise about the reading. What did you learn that was new or interesting?
 - D) At least one statement of critique about the reading— are there limitations or problems with the reading, does the author's argument represent solid reasoning (i.e., is it clear, does it make sense), does the author support her/his/their argument with adequate evidence?
 - E) Two discussion questions about the reading. Are parts of the articles unclear or do they generate broader concerns? Are there connections to other material that can be made? What aspects of the article would you like to talk about? Make sure these questions are thought-provoking, not "What did you think about the article," or "What is the author saying"?

During seminar group work, each group should first choose a notetaker for the discussion. Then, each individual in the group will present their quote and statements of praise/critique (B, C, and D above) as well as questions to their Seminar group. The group is required to answer one question from each individual (so 4 questions total) and submit your answers to the questions at the end of class, in

writing. The notetaker should prepare the writeup during the group discussion. After your discussion ends and the notetaker has completed the writeup, your group will staple your individual seminar assignments to the back of the writeup.

Your Seminar grade will depend on the material that you submit individually (quality and thoroughness) as well as your contribution to the group discussion and answering the questions. I will be walking around to check contribution and ensuring that discussion is conducted in a meaningful way. What this means is that not all group members automatically receive the same grade.

(4) Group Research Project and Presentation: You will form groups (of 4 to 5 students each) and conduct social research as a team. Your group will present your research to the class at the end of the quarter. *A handout will be posted on the class website in the early part of the quarter.*

(5) Participation and HW: Participation is essential to the format of this class and will therefore contribute significantly toward your grade. In short, your success in this class depends on your *active* participation. “Participation” includes attendance (remember that you are allowed to miss four classes without penalty to the participation portion of your grade), class discussions, group work, and independent in-class assignments such as film questions. *Do not take this portion of your grade lightly – excellent attendance can significantly improve your final grade!*

DISABLED STUDENTS

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

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](#).

COURSE CALENDAR

The following Course Calendar will be revised as needed. Please note that you will be held responsible for all revisions to the calendar. If you miss a class, be sure to check either with me or a classmate regarding any changes.

You should make every effort to read the articles and chapters in the order listed (there is a reason why they're ordered in this manner!). "Sex Matters" refers to the textbook. **The page number listed beside it is the page that the article/essay begins on. (You should read the entire article/essay.)** Several additional articles can be found online on our *Canvas* course site.

WEEK ONE – Introduction to the Course

Read Sex Matters, "Are We Having Sex Now or What?" p5

Read Sex Matters, "Diversity in Conceptualizing Having 'Had Sex'" p9

Read Martin's "The Egg and the Sperm" (ON WEBSITE)

DUE WEDNESDAY: Read syllabus and make sure you understand it (there may be a 'pop' quiz!)

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON ALL WEEK ONE MATERIAL

WEEK TWO – The Social Construction of Gender

Read Lorber's "Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender" (ON WEBSITE)

Read West and Zimmerman "Doing Gender" (ON WEBSITE)

Read Sex Matters, "The Perils and Pleasures of Sex for Transpeople" pp22-28

DUE MONDAY: SEMINAR ON "Night to His Day"

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK TWO MATERIAL

WEEK THREE – The Social Construction of Sex

NOTE: Our class is cancelled on Friday, October 9

Read "The Five Sexes" (on WEBSITE)

Read "The Five Sexes, Revisted" (on WEBSITE)

Read Sex Matters, "Bringing Intersexy Back? Intersexuals and Sexual Satisfaction" p11

Read "Creating Good-Looking Genitals in the Service of Gender" (on WEBSITE)

Read "The M/F Boxes" (on WEBSITE)

Read "Beards, Breasts, and Bodies: Doing Sex in a Gendered World" (on WEBSITE)

DUE MONDAY: SEMINAR ON "The Five Sexes"

DUE THURSDAY: LIST OF GROUP MEMBERS FOR YOUR PROJECT

DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON 'Beards, Breasts, and Bodies'

DUE THURSDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK THREE MATERIAL

WEEK FOUR – The Social Construction of Sexuality

Read Sex Matters, “Straight Dude Seeks Same: Mapping the Relationship Between Sexual Identities, Practices, and Cultures” p29

Read Sex Matters, “Gay By Choice? The Science of Sexual Identity” p36

Read Sex Matters, “Queer by Choice, Not by Chance” pp41-42

Read Sex Matters, “Straight Girls Kissing” p43

DUE TUESDAY: SEMINAR ON “Straight Dude Seeks Same”

DUE FRIDAY: SEMINAR ON “Straight Girls Kissing”

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK FOUR MATERIAL

WEEK FIVE – The Social Construction of Racialized Sexualities

NOTE: No classes at Bellevue College on Tuesday, October 20th

Read Alavi “Little White Lies: Race, Dildos, and American Culture” (ON WEBSITE)

Read Sex Matters, “Geisha of a Different Kind” p128

Read Espin “Cultural and Historical Influences on Sexuality in Hispanic/Latin Women” (ON WEBSITE)

Read Sex Matters, “Visibility as Privilege and Danger: Heterosexual and Same-Sex Interracial Intimacy” p422

DUE MONDAY: SEMINAR ON “LITTLE WHITE LIES”

DUE MONDAY: Research Group must choose topic by today

DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON “Geisha of a Different Kind” and “Cultural and Historical Influences on Sexuality in Hispanic/Latin Women” (bring one seminar assignment for EACH article)

DUE FRIDAY: SEMINAR ON “Visibility as Privilege and Danger”

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK FIVE MATERIAL

WEEK SIX – Becoming Sexual

Read Sex Matters, “The Death of the Stork” p189

Read Sex Matters, “Sexuality Education and Desire: Still Missing After All These Years” p206

Read Sex Matters, “Fighting Teenage Pregnancy with MTV Stars as Exhibit A” p242

Read Sex Matters, “The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth in American Schools” p234

Read Sex Matters, “Put Me In, Coach: Sex Lessons for Adults” p254

Read “Doing Desire” (on WEBSITE)

Read “Faking It” (on WEBSITE)

DUE MONDAY: Exam #1

DUE WEDNESDAY: SEMINAR ON “DOING DESIRE” and “FAKING IT” (bring one seminar assignment for each article!)

DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON “The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Youth in American Schools”

DUE FRIDAY: POSTER PRESENTATIONS FOR GROUP PROJECTS

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK SIX MATERIAL

WEEK SEVEN – The Sexual Body

Read “Sociocultural Representations of the Vagina” (ON WEBSITE)

Read Sex Matters, “The G-Spot and Other Mysteries,” p262

Read Sex Matters, “In Search of (Better) Sexual Pleasure: Female Genital ‘Cosmetic’ Surgery” p313

Read Sex Matters, “The Pleasures of Childbirth” p322

Read “The Size Question” (ON WEBSITE)

Read Sex Matters, “Fixing the Broken Male Machine,” p295

Read Sex Matters, “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice: Why Can’t We Stop Circumcizing Boys?” p270

DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON “SOCIOCULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE VAGINA”

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK SEVEN MATERIAL

WEEK EIGHT – Sexual Variations

NOTE: No classes at Bellevue College on Wednesday, November 11th

Read Sex Matters, “The Pursuit of Pleasure” p345

Read Sex Matters, “There’s More to Life Than Sex? Difference and Commonality Within the Asexual Community” p403

Read “The Pleasure of the Pain” (ON WEBSITE)

Read Sex Matters, “Becoming a Practitioner: The Biopolitics of BDSM” p432

Visit <http://www.sexuality.org/1/bdsm/bdsmfaq.html> (Read about what BDSM is, as well as sadomasochism) (TAKE NOTES!)

ONLY IF YOU ARE 18 or older: visit www.mistressmatisse.com to read about one of the Seattle area’s busier dominatrices. (Take NOTES, particularly about her rules and boundaries)

DUE TUESDAY: SEMINAR ON “THE PLEASURE OF THE PAIN”

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK EIGHT MATERIAL

WEEK NINE – Sexual Variations

Read “Against Love: A Treatise on the Tyranny of Two” (ON WEBSITE)

Read Sex Matters, “Reclaiming Raunch? Spatializing Queer Identities at Toronto Women’s Bathhouse Events” p415

Visit <http://www.sexuality.org/mgswing.html> (Find out what swinging is, explore the types of swinging, and discover what kinds of people are “swingers”) (YOU WILL WANT TO TAKE NOTES ABOUT THESE ISSUES)

Visit <http://www.polyamorysociety.org/> (Learn about what polyamory is; understand how it differs from “swinging”; explore the types of polyamory and other background information about polyamory) (TAKE NOTES)

DUE MONDAY: SEMINAR ON “AGAINST LOVE”

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK NINE MATERIAL

WEEK TEN – Sex Work

NOTE: No classes at Bellevue College on Thursday and Friday, November 26-27

Read Sex Matters, “The Porning of America”

Read Sex Matters, “Gay-for-Pay: Straight Men and the Making of Gay Pornography” p139

Read Sex Matters, “What We Know about Pornography” p154

Read Sex Matters, “Out of Line: The Sexy Femmegimp Politics of Flaunting it!” p157

Read “The Worst Thing is the Screwing” pp317-328 (on WEBSITE)

Read “Fantasy Islands” (on WEBSITE)

DUE TUESDAY: SEMINAR ON “FANTASY ISLANDS” and “THE WORST THING IS THE SCREWING” (bring a seminar assignment for EACH)

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK TEN MATERIAL

WEEK ELEVEN – GROUP PRESENTATIONS

WEEK TWELVE –

Exam #2 – Thursday, December 10th, 11:30am-1:20pm. Plan ahead accordingly. I do not give early or late final exams.