

SOC 256: SOCIOLOGY OF SEXUALITIES

Spring 2011
Bellevue College



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(Note: when emailing me, please put "SOC 256" in the subject line)
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Office Hours: 9:30-10:20am daily
Office Location: D110K
Class Meets: Daily 10:30am-11:20am
Class Location: A130

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?
Why do some men rape?

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.

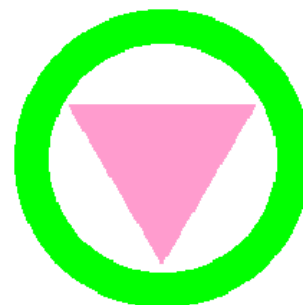
As we all come to the course with strong ideas and beliefs about sexuality, the subject matter can be personally as well as intellectually challenging. Some of what you will learn in this course may initially seem like "common sense." Sometimes what you will learn might be shocking, surprising, or even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

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 may have frank discussions about potentially sensitive and explicit topics. 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 an “R” rated class.)

REGARDING SAFE SPACE: This class is a Safe Space for **all** students. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, questioning, queer-identified, and transgendered students are welcome in this 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 this classroom is encouraged. Any questions about what this means should be brought to me immediately. All are welcome!



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”;
- Confront the limits and special problems of scientific research on sex and sexuality;
- 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 that are different from your own;
- Recognize how sex and sexualities are marketed, packaged and sold by society;
- Critically examine how societies regulate sexual behavior;
- Describe what “social construction” means; and
- Look at sexuality from a sociological perspective.

NOTE: This course’s General Education ratings are: 3 in Critical Thinking, 2 in Reading, 2 in Ethics, 2 in Historical and Intellectual Perspectives, and 2 in Cultural Diversity.

REQUIRED TEXTS AND MISCELLANEOUS PURCHASES

Texts: “Sexualities: Identities, Behaviors, and Society” by Kimmel and Plante
Additional readings are on reserve at *MyBCC* (from the BCC homepage)

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND EXPECTATIONS

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 textbook, 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 whenever 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 again in the afternoon, and I always check my email a few times a day. 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.* Thank you in advance for your understanding and consideration.
- *Attention.* When you are speaking, you will have my undivided attention.
- *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 BCC guideline for homework is two hours outside of class for each hour spent in class.
- *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 suffer 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 textbook (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 (17 @ 15 pts each)	255 points
Group Research Project/Presentation	200 points
Participation and HW	65 points
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 six 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.
- (3) **Seminar:** We will have nineteen seminars over the course of the quarter, but only seventeen will count towards your grade in the class (I drop the two lowest scores). 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. Early in the quarter, I will assign students randomly to groups. This will be your quarter-long Seminar Group (although I reserve the right to re-assign groups at any time, particularly if a group has become dysfunctional). Each week, you will work in this group, having discussions with your group members and completing a brief group assignment with them. (*more*)

If you look at the Course Calendar, you will see that there is at least one Seminar due every week (with the exceptions of weeks one and eleven). On Seminar day, it is crucial that you come to class prepared. You will

need to complete the reading ahead of time and bring a brief assignment to each seminar. (NOTE: I will not accept assignments that are not typed.) Each INDEPENDENT seminar assignment (that you bring with you to class on Seminar day) should include the following:

- a statement of what you think the article's main claim/conclusion is (in your own words); in other words, what is the thesis of the article, and what is the author CONCLUDING about the topic? (Oftentimes, the title of the article is a big hint about the conclusion/thesis!) Please note that a thesis is NOT the same as the topic of the article, but rather, a thesis is an ARGUABLE CLAIM that the author is making.
- 3-4 central questions that you have about the article that you would like to talk about with your classmates (the questions should be thought-provoking, not "What did you think about the article?" and "What is the author saying?").
- Seminar assignments should NOT include your opinion about the article (you will have plenty of time to talk about that during seminar!).

In class on seminar days, you will break into your assigned groups and come to an agreement about what the thesis of the article is. Your group will write your agreed-upon thesis on a piece of paper, and then begin talking about your discussion questions. After your discussion ends, your group will staple your individual seminar assignments to the sheet of paper that contains your agreed-upon thesis, and you'll CIRCLE the best three discussion-questions (that is, the three questions that were the most thought- and discussion-provoking for you all). I grade seminar in the following manner:

I review your group's agreed-upon thesis and assign it a grade (for example, 15 out of 15). I then look at my notes from class and check to see who contributed to discussion in a meaningful way. Those students will receive the highest grade in the group (in this example, they'd receive 15s). Students who participate a little might receive 10s, and those who don't participate at all would receive zeros. Students who do not submit individual assignments (stapled in the packet) also receive a **zero** grade. This means that not all seminar group members automatically receive the same grade – students who participate less receive lowered grades.

- (4) Group Research Project and Presentation: You will form groups (of 4 to 5 students each) and conduct original social research as a team. This is not traditional library research; rather, your team will "go out" into the world and collect data about a course-related topic of your choice. You might decide, for example, to survey BC students about their sexual desires or prejudices. You might go to a public library and analyze the messages found in children's sex education books. Or, you might visit a strip club and conduct an analysis of how sex is sold there. Your group will present your research to the class at the end of the quarter. *For more information, please see the handout posted on the class website.*
- (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!*

Students with Disabilities. All students are responsible for all requirements of the class, but the way they meet these requirements may vary. If you need specific academic accommodations due to a disability, please speak with me and with Disability Resource Center (564-2498). You will need to obtain the appropriate documentation from DRC in room B233. The disability accommodation documentation must be given to me before it is needed rather than afterward, so that we can make appropriate arrangements.

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!). "Sexualities" refers to the textbook. Several additional articles can be found online on our course site at *MyBC*.

WEEK ONE – Introduction to the Course and the Science of Sexuality

Read McIntyre's "Who's Afraid of Sociology?" pp44-51 (ON WEBSITE)

Read Sexualities "Introduction" ppxi-xv

Read Martin's "The Egg and the Sperm" pp23-31 (ON WEBSITE)

DUE THURSDAY: Read syllabus and make sure you understand it

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON 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 Nanda's "Hijra and Sadhin" pp192-200 (ON WEBSITE)

Read Lang's "Lesbians, Men-Women, and Two-Spirits: Homosexuality and Gender in Native American Cultures" pp202-209 (ON WEBSITE)

DUE MONDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK TWO MATERIAL

DUE WEDNESDAY: SEMINAR ON "NIGHT TO HIS DAY"

DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON "LESBIANS, MEN-WOMEN, & TWO SPIRITS"

WEEK THREE – The Social Construction of Sex

Read Sexualities "The Five Sexes" pp39-44

Read Sexualities "Creating Good-Looking Genitals in the Service of Gender" pp64-70

Read Sexualities "The M/F Boxes" pp250-253

Read Sexualities "Coming Out and Crossing Over" pp230-247

DUE MONDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK THREE MATERIAL

DUE TUESDAY: SEMINAR ON "THE FIVE SEXES"

DUE FRIDAY: LIST OF GROUP MEMBERS FOR YOUR PROJECT

WEEK FOUR – The Social Construction of Sexuality

Read Gordon, L. and S. Abbott "The Social Constructionist's 'Essential' Guide to Sex" (ON WEBSITE)

Read Ingraham, C. "Ritualizing Heterosexuality: Weddings as Performance" (ON WEBSITE)

Read Golden, C. "Do Women Choose Their Sexual Identity?" (ON WEBSITE)

Read Sexualities "Two Many and Not Enough: The Meanings of Bisexual Identities" pp216-229

DUE MONDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK FOUR MATERIAL

DUE TUESDAY: SEMINAR ON "THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST'S 'ESSENTIAL' GUIDE TO SEX"

DUE FRIDAY: SEMINAR ON "TWO MANY AND NOT ENOUGH"

WEEK FIVE – The Social Construction of Racialized Sexualities

Read Alavi “Little White Lies: Race, Dildos, and American Culture” (ON WEBSITE)
 Read Espiritu “The Racial Construction of Asian American Women and Men” (ON WEBSITE)
 Read Espiritu “We Don’t Sleep Around like White Girls Do” (ON WEBSITE)
 Read Espin “Cultural and Historical Influences on Sexuality in Hispanic/Latin Women” (ON WEBSITE)
DUE MONDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK FIVE MATERIAL
DUE MONDAY: SEMINAR ON “LITTLE WHITE LIES”
DUE MONDAY: TOPIC AND RESEARCH PLAN FOR GROUP PROJECT DUE
DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON “THE RACIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND MEN” and “WE DON’T SLEEP AROUND LIKE WHITE GIRLS DO” (bring one seminar assignment for EACH article)
DUE FRIDAY: SEMINAR ON “CULTURAL AND HISTORICAL INFLUENCES ON SEXUALITY IN HISPANIC/LATIN WOMEN”

WEEK SIX – Becoming Sexual

Read Sexualities “Becoming Sexual” p73
 Read Sexualities “Sexuality and Gender in Children’s Daily Worlds” pp74-85
 Read Sexualities “Doing Desire” pp87-98
 Read Sexualities “Asian-American Adolescents: Issues in the Expression of Sexuality” pp106-113
 Read Sexualities “Dating and Romantic Relationships Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth” pp113-121
 Read Sexualities “Faking It” pp266-273
DUE MONDAY: Exam #1
DUE TUESDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK SIX MATERIAL
DUE WEDNESDAY: SEMINAR ON “DOING DESIRE” and “FAKING IT” (bring one seminar assignment for each article!)
DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON “DATING AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AMONG GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISEXUAL YOUTH”
DUE FRIDAY: POSTER PRESENTATIONS FOR GROUP PROJECTS

WEEK SEVEN – The Sexual Body

Read “The Size Question” (ON WEBSITE)
 Read “Pills and Power Tools” (ON WEBSITE)
 Read “The Sorcerer’s Apprentice: Why Can’t We Stop Circumcizing Boys?” (ON WEBSITE)
 Read “Sociocultural Representations of the Vagina” (ON WEBSITE)
 Read “Because He Liked to Look at It” (ON WEBSITE, but attached to last page of the “Sociocultural Representations of the Vagina” article)
DUE MONDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK SEVEN MATERIAL
DUE TUESDAY: SEMINAR ON “PILLS AND POWER TOOLS”
DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON “SOCIOCULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE VAGINA”

WEEK EIGHT – Sexual Variations: Fetishism and Sadomasochism

Read Sexualities “Variations and Adaptations” p257
 Visit <http://www.sexuality.org/1/bdsm/bdsmfaq.html> (Read about what BDSM is, as well as sadomasochism) (TAKE NOTES!)
 Read Sexualities “Sadomasochistically Oriented Behavior” pp258-265 (NOTE: Do not get “bogged down” on the methods and statistics in this article – you are NOT expected to understand the mathematical and methodological analysis!)
 Read “The Pleasure of the Pain” (ON WEBSITE)
 Visit www.mistressmatisse.com to read about one of the Seattle area’s more infamous dominatrixes. (Take NOTES, particularly about her rules and boundaries)

DUE MONDAY: QUIZ on WEEK EIGHT MATERIAL

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

WEEK NINE – Sexual Variations: Polyamory/Swinging

NOTE: No classes on Monday, May 30th

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

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 TUESDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK NINE MATERIAL

DUE WEDNESDAY: SEMINAR ON “AGAINST LOVE”

WEEK TEN – Sex Work: Exotic Dancing, Prostitution, and Pornography

Read Sexualities “The Production of Identity and the Negotiation of Intimacy in a ‘Gentleman’s Club” pp300-309

Read Sexualities “The Worst Thing is the Screwing” pp317-328

Read Sexualities “Fantasy Islands” pp331-341

Read Sexualities “Pornography” p342

Read Sexualities “Pornography and Media” pp369-379

Read Sexualities “Creating a Scene: The Work of Performing Sex” pp380-389

DUE MONDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK TEN MATERIAL

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

DUE FRIDAY: SEMINAR ON “PORNOGRAPHY AND THE MEDIA”

DUE FRIDAY: EXAM #2

WEEK ELEVEN – GROUP PRESENTATIONS

Groups will give research presentations on the following days (your group will sign up for a date later in the quarter):

Monday 10:30-11:20

Tuesday 10:30-11:20

Wednesday 9:30-11:20am