

Introduction to Sex & Sexuality
SOC 256, Fall 2008
Bellevue Community College



Instructor: Lori Saffin
Email: lsaffin@bellevuecollege.edu
Office Phone: (425) 564-2169
Office Hours: MWF 1:30-2:30
T Th 9:30-10:20

Office Location: D110- I
Class Meets: Daily 12:30-1:20
Class Location: L-126

Course Introduction:

- Are all people clearly either “male” or “female”?
- Why do women and men appear to think so differently about sex?
- Does everyone around the world “have sex” in the same ways?
- Is sexual orientation learned?
- Why is penis size 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 that you have a passion too.

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 several 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, players, 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 time to study it. In fact, we are often misinformed about sex. This course is designed to untangle sexual myths from sexual realities. 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 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.

Required Texts:

1. Robert Heasley and Betsy Crane, Sexual Lives: A Reader on the Theories and Realities of Human Sexuality (Boston: McGraw Hill Publishers, 2003).
2. Additional articles or handouts will be posted on the course website or distributed in class

Learning Atmosphere:

I believe that students learn best when they are actively involved in the teaching and learning process. Thus, this is an active and interactive course where you will often 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 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.

A note about course content: Since sociologists examine just about every aspect of the social world, we will sometimes talk about provocative material in class. Please be advised that when we explore controversial topics, they will be framed in an academic context. Topics run the gamut in sociology and at times there may be material that makes people uncomfortable. Keep in mind that when we find ourselves in a space outside of our comfort zone, it's an opportunity for learning. You may be confronted with subject matter that is difficult to watch, see, discuss, or listen to. You are free to leave the room at any time, but please know you will be responsible for any course material you may have missed while you were gone. Also, profanity exists in our social world and thus will be used throughout this course - so please be advised. If you have any questions or concerns about course content or climate, don't hesitate to let me know.

Learning and Course Outcomes:

After completing the course, a successful student will be able to:

1. Explain the difference between key concepts in the field, such as "sex," "gender," "sexuality," and "sexual orientation";
2. Confront the limits and special problems of scientific research on sex and sexuality;
3. Compare norms and cultural perspectives on sexual behavior across societies;
4. Describe the ways in which our culture and society shape our sexual opinions and experiences;
5. Illustrate how gender influences sexual attitudes and behaviors;
6. Better understand sexual practices and perspectives that are outside of your own;
7. Recognize how sex and sexualities are marketed, packaged, and sold by society;
8. Critically examine how societies regulate sexual behavior;
9. Describe what "social construction" means and look at sexuality from a sociological perspective.

General Education Outcomes:

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.

General Course Rules and Expectations:

- **Attendance:** Attend all class meetings and come to class on time. 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. More than three unexcused absences or late attendances will lower your grade, and continue to do so as you miss more classes. To have an absence or tardy considered excused, you must discuss it with me prior to the absence or tardy, unless it is an emergency. Excused absences include doctor's visits, family emergencies, and sometimes work-related issues. If you miss class, please connect with your colleagues to find out what you missed. 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.
- **Preparation:** You should come to class having done all the assigned reading and homework and you should always bring the proper supplies with you, including your textbook. Note that the BCC guideline for homework is two hours outside of class for each hour spent in class.
- **Assignments/Late work:** Late work, such as papers or projects, is accepted, but 10% of the grade is taken off for each day (24 hour period) that your work is late under all circumstances. Make-up quizzes, in-class activities, or homework cannot be made up, unless you absence is excused. Emailed assignments are not accepted.
- **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. Therefore, you are expected to be an active participant in our learning environment. An active participant can include contributing to discussions, but can also mean getting to class on time, taking notes, listening to your peers, and coming to class prepared. You should do your best to contribute to class discussions and activities.
- **Respect and Classroom Etiquette:** All electronic devices are prohibited in the classroom at all times. This includes cell phones, blackberries, laptops, i-pods/mp3 players, etc. If you need a laptop to take notes, I will need verification. Furthermore, I expect that your behavior in class be respectful. Learning about diverse experiences is central to this course, so it is of the utmost importance that you respect your classmates' experiences, differences, and opinions. In order for us to learn from each other, we have to allow each other to make mistakes and to offer unpopular positions for debate. This is a college classroom and as such, I expect students to behave as adults. I do not tolerate excessive talking or whispering, consistent late arrivals, or early departures. Students who are disrespectful to their classmates or the instructor will be asked to leave class and will be marked absent until arrangements are made with the instructor to return to class and will result in your participation credit lowering.
- **Honesty:** Plagiarism or cheating of any kind will result in a failing grade for the course and a report to Student Affairs. 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 borrowed any ideas, terms, or phrases, even if you have borrowed from a classmate. See the BCC handbook on academic dishonesty for further details and if you are at any time unclear about what constitutes plagiarism or cheating, please see me.

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 Support Services (425)564-2498. You will need to obtain the appropriate documentation from DSS 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.

Grading:

Grades are based on four factors. (1) Participation and Discussion, (2) Homework/Reflection Papers, (3) Group Research Project and Presentation, and (4) Exams. Each of these elements is awarded a specific number of points:

Participation/Discussion/In-Class Activities	100 points
Homework/Reflection Paper (5 at 20 points/each)	100 points
Group Research Project and Presentation	200 points
Exams (2 at 100 points/each)	200 points
TOTAL	600 points

Grade	Points	Percentage
A	555-600	100-93%
A-	543-554	92-90%
B+	525-542	89-87%
B	501-524	86-83%
B-	477-500	82-80%
C+	465-476	79-77%

C	435-464	76-73%
C-	417-434	72-70%
D+	405-416	69-67%
D	357-404	66-60%
F	356 & Below	59% & Below

The following is a brief description of each of the 4 components:

1. Participation/Discussion/In-Class Activities:

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, class discussions, group work, and independent in-class assignments. Accountability for the readings is also taken into consideration. Do not take this portion of your grade lightly!

2. Homework/Reflection Papers:

Over the course of the quarter, you will be asked to submit five 1-2 page reflection papers or homework assignments. Due dates are listed in the syllabus and on the course calendar. Handouts will be given out the week that each assignment is due explaining the question, experiment, or activity that you need to complete.

3. Group Research Project and Presentation:

You will form into 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 BCC students about their sexual preferences and prejudices. You might go to a public library and analyze the messages found in children's sex education books. You might analyze

how condoms (or tampons) are marketed. Or, you might visit a strip club and conduct a “content analysis” of how sex is sold. Your group will present your research to the class at the end of the quarter. More details about this project will be distributed early in the quarter.

4. 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.

General Written Work Guidelines:

All papers or written work should be in Times New Roman, 12 point font, with 1” margins on all sides. Your work must be cited in MLA style and you must always give proper credit to the texts from which you draw and formulate your ideas. Title pages and bibliographies are not counted toward the minimum page requirements. Papers should be written from an academic perspective – so no colloquial language please!

General Grading Guidelines for Written Work:

A Paper - An A paper shows me you’re engaged with the readings, the media, and the lectures in class. It’s a paper free from grammar and spelling errors, and a paper that demonstrated your command not only of the English language, but of the form and flow of a solid piece of written work. Your arguments are solid and backed up with intellectual ammunition. You’ve demonstrated a strong understanding of our readings and the in-class materials and how they intersect with one another.

B Paper – The B tells me you’re doing very good work. You may have a few grammar issues, but your paper is still tidy and the writing is still strong. You have a relatively firm grasp on the themes in the course but you may not be as well versed in the readings or materials as you could be. Your understandings of some of the course materials are stronger than others, but I would like to see you challenge yourself a bit more with the course issues and themes.

C Paper – The C paper means that you’re not as invested in the class as I’d like to see. Your writing is relatively weaker than it could be and you’re not thinking as critically as I’d like you to. Some of what you point out I may not follow logically, and your use of the course materials may not be as solid as it could be. You omit some of the important points raised in class.

D Paper – A D paper is not proofread and it does not deal critically with the themes in the course. It responds, perhaps, to one part of one of the readings but there is no integration of material or questions raised in class. The course materials are not presented clearly, or at all. I will work closely with each of you as much as time allows. Please note: a D paper or below may be resubmitted once during the quarter for a better grade.

Syllabus:

You are expected to have read the readings assigned for the current day by the time you arrive in class!

****Though I will try to remain as faithful as possible to this syllabus, I reserve the right to make changes. These will be announced in advance in class. ****

Week 1:

Monday, Sept. 22nd: Introduction to the Course

Go over syllabus; class introductions; beginning definitions

Tuesday, Sept. 23rd: Thinking Critically about Sex, Gender, and Sexuality

Readings: "Introduction," pp. 1-13

Wednesday, Sept. 24th: Sex: (not just the act of...)

Readings: "Labor of Love," course website

"M/F Boxes," course website

Thursday, Sept. 25th: Intersexuality: Where Science Meets Sex

Readings: "Making the Cut," course website

Friday, Sept. 26th: Beyond the Binary: Just Male and Female?

Readings: "The Five Sexes: Revisited," pp. 334-39

Optional Reading (or if this article makes no sense) – see the original Five Sexes essay on the course website

Homework/Reflection Paper # 1 Due



Week 2:

Monday, Sept. 29th: "Doing Gender"

Read: "Night to His Day," course website



Tuesday, Sept. 30th: Social Construction of Gender: Cultural Influences

Read: "Hijras," on course website

Wednesday, Oct. 1st: In-Class activity on Gender

Thursday, Oct. 2nd: Thinking Outside of the Gender Box

Read: "Dismantling Gender Polarization," pp. 253-61

Friday, Oct. 3rd: Gender in Real-Time

Homework/Reflection Paper #2 Due



Week 3:

Monday, Oct. 6th: Becoming Sexual

Readings: "Sexual Journeys: Two Essays," pp. 20-28

Tuesday, Oct. 7th: Debunking Childhood "Innocence"

Readings: "Becoming Sexual: Differences in Childhood and Adult Sexuality," pp. 101-08

"The Kindest Uncut," pp. 289-96



Wednesday, Oct. 8th: In-Class Activity: Learning Sex and Sexuality

Thursday, Oct. 9th: All-but-Penetration? Meanings behind Sex

Readings: "Blowjobs and Other Boring Stuff," pp. 126-128
"Where'd You Learn That?," 119-125



Friday, Oct. 10th: Sex Matters: Our Bodies, Ourselves
Homework/Reflection Paper #3 Due



Week 4:

Monday, Oct. 13th: The Sexual Body

Readings: "Four Boxes of Gendered Sexuality," pp 196-216

Tuesday, Oct. 14th: Demystifying the Power of the Penis

Readings: "The Size Question," on course website
"The Sensual Man," pp. 600-606



Wednesday, Oct. 15th: In-Class exercise on Sexuality and the Body

Thursday, Oct. 16th: Vagina (ssshhhh!)

Readings: "Socio-cultural Representations of the Vagina," on course website

Friday, Oct. 17th: Talkin' about a (Sexual) Revolution

Homework/Reflection Paper #4 Due

Week 5:

Monday, Oct. 20th: Exam #1

Tuesday, Oct. 21st: Compulsory Heterosexuality

Readings: "Ritualizing Heterosexuality: Wedding as Performance," 235-244
"The Heterosexual Questionnaire," pg. 403

Wednesday, Oct. 22nd: The Impacts of Homophobia on Sexual Identity

Readings: "Straight Jacket of My Homophobia," pp. 407-411
"GLB Students: Impacts of Schools," pp. 156-164
"Becoming 100% Straight," pp. 388-393



Thursday, Oct 23rd: Bisexuality.... Het privilege? Greedy Sex Addicts? Confused? What!

Readings: "Bi Any Other Name," pp. 388-93
"Bisexualities," on course website

Friday, Oct 24th: When a Man Loves a Woman...Or a Man... Or?

Readings: "I am a Queer Heterosexual," pp. 400-402
"Transgender Warriors," pp. 272-28

Week 6

Monday, Oct. 27th: Racialized Sexualities: Black Masculinity

Readings: "Reconstructing Black Masculinity," pp. 217-234
"Black Sexuality: A Taboo Subject," on course website

Tuesday, Oct. 28th: Black Womanhood: Reconfiguring Stereotypes



Readings: "The Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood," on course website
Research Question for Group Project Due

Wednesday, Oct. 29th: No Class – College Issues Day

Thursday, Oct. 30th: Chicano/a and Latino/a Sexual Representation

Readings: "Cultural and Historical Influences on Sexuality in "Hispanic"/Latin Women," pp. 69-76

Friday, Oct. 31st: Asian Americans in the Media

Readings: "The Racial Construction of Asian American Women and Men," on course website
"The Third Sex: Asian American Men in Popular Culture," on course website

Homework/Reflection Paper #5 Due

Week 7 -

Monday, Nov. 3rd: Sexual Variations – Swingin'

Readings: Visit <http://www.sexuality.org/swinging.html> and read what swinging is, who participates, different types of swinging, and why people/couples swing information



Tuesday, Nov. 4th: Polyamory

Readings: Visit <http://www.polyamorysociety.org/> and learn what polyamory is, how it differs from swinging, explore the types of polyamory and other background

Wednesday, Nov. 5th: BDSM Play

Readings: "The Pleasure of the Pain," on course website

Visit <http://www.mistressmatisse.com/welcome.html> to read about one of the Seattle area's more infamous dominatrixes. Pay particular attention to the Rules and Boundaries.

Thursday, Nov. 6th: Poly-, A-, Meta-, Metro-, Omni-Sexual...What?

Friday, Nov. 7th: In-Class Day to Work on Group Projects

Research Group Project Methodology Due

Week 8:

Monday, Nov. 10th Commercial Sex: Prostitution

Readings: "The Social Consequences of Unchastity," pp. 433-42

Tuesday, Nov. 11th: No Class –Professional Development Day

Wednesday, Nov. 12th: Sex Slavery

Readings: "The Sex Exploiter," pp. 444-65

Thursday, Nov. 13th: Pornography...

Readings: "Pornography and the Alienation of Male Sexuality," pp. 477-84

Friday, Nov. 14th: ... Versus Erotica?

Readings: "Towards a Feminist Erotica," pp. 485-90



Week 9

Monday, Nov. 17th: Rape: Beginning Conversations – Lecture

Readings: “Two Poems,” pp. 498

Research Group Project Draft Due

Tuesday, Nov. 18th: Rape as a Culture

Readings: “Rape Culture,” on course website

Wednesday, Nov. 19th: Women’s Resisting Sexual Violence

Readings: “Demands from the Women of Antioch,” pp. 518-24

“Breaking the Silence, Making Laughter: Testimony of an Asian-American Sister,” pp. 525-36



Thursday, Nov. 20th: I’m Not a Rapist! Men’s Responses to Sexual Violence

Readings: “Men on Rape: What they have to Say about Sexual Violence,” pp. 537-53

“Men: Comrades in Struggle,” on course website

Friday, Nov. 21st: In-Class Day to Work on Group Projects

Week 10

Monday, Nov. 24th: Exam #2

Tuesday, Nov. 25th: “Bring Your Own Media” Day

Bring a film clip, song, magazine, lyrics, youtube video, your own art work/zine/poetry that deals with an aspect of this class that has made you rethink/revise/ or react and share with the class



Wednesday, Nov. 26th: No Class

Thursday, Nov. 27th: No Class

Friday, Nov. 28th: No Class



Week 11

Monday, Dec. 1st: So Where do we go from Here?

Readings: “Student Voices” and “I Have a Dream,” pp. 617-19

Tuesday, Dec. 2nd: Sexuality and Social Change – Wrap up and Discussion

Wednesday, Dec. 3rd: Group Presentations

Thursday, Dec. 4th: Group Presentations

Friday, Dec. 5th: Group Presentations

