

SOC 256: SOCIOLOGY OF SEXUALITIES
Spring 2009
Bellevue Community College



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(Note: when emailing me, please put "SOC 256" in the subject line)
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Office Hours: 8:30-9:20am 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.)

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.
- *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. Please try to make it your personal goal to visit my office hours at least once this quarter. I think you will find it helpful. If my office hours are not convenient for you, we can schedule an appointment that fits your schedule.
- *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. 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.*
- *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 can not 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. 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 unless you have had it approved by me BEFORE the due date.** Late work will receive a **zero** grade.

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

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. Major due dates are indicated on the attached Course Calendar, so plan ahead.

- *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.* If you cheat, 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. 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, (5) a group presentation of an article, and (6) class participation. Each of these elements is awarded a specific number of points:

Weekly Quizzes (5 @ 60 pts each)	300 points (30% of final grade)
Exams (2 @ 100 pts each)	200 points (20% of final grade)
Seminar	200 points (20% of final grade)
Research project and presentation	150 points (15% of final grade)
Article presentation	100 points (10% of final grade)
Participation	50 points (5% of final grade)
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) Performance on Quizzes: Five in-class quizzes are given over the course of the quarter (that's about one every other week on average). Quiz dates are provided on the attached Course Calendar, so plan ahead accordingly. Quizzes should take no longer than 15 minutes and are administered at the beginning of class. Quizzes are designed to test whether or not you *completed* and *understand* the readings and course material from the current and previous weeks. Note that **you cannot makeup missed quizzes**. If you come in late on a quiz day, you will be expected to finish the quiz at the same time as the rest of the class.
(5 quizzes @ 60 points each = 300 total points)
- (2) Performance on 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.
(2 exams @ 100 points each = 200 total points)
- (3) Performance in Seminar: We will have seventeen seminars over the course of the quarter, but only fifteen will count towards your grade in the class (I drop the two lowest scores). Seminar involves breaking students into groups in order to have thought-provoking discussions about a reading or two. It is crucial that you come to seminar prepared. You will need to complete the readings ahead of time and bring a brief paper (approximately 1 typed page) to each seminar. (NOTE: I will not accept papers that are not typed.)

Each seminar paper should include the following:

- a statement of the article's thesis (in your own words!); in other words, what is the main point of the article, and what is the author CONCLUDING about the topic?
- 3-4 central questions that you have about the article (the questions should be thought-provoking, not "What did you think about the article?" and "What is the author saying?"); these are meant to be the questions you'd like to ask your classmates during discussion.

Seminar papers should NOT include your opinion about the article (you will have plenty of time to talk about that during seminar!). Instead, remain focused in your papers, and succinctly explain what the author is actually saying. Your seminar grade is based on attendance, participation, and papers.

Seminar papers:	15 @ 10pts each = 150 points
Seminar participation:	50 points
TOTAL SEMINAR POINTS:	200

- (4) Performance on 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 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. 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 the quarter.*
(Research Project and Presentation = 150 total points)

(5) Article Presentation: You will divide into groups of three and "teach" the class about a reading of your choice. (I will provide you with a list of readings from which you will choose.) Each teaching presentation should take about 20-25 minutes and have certain components: it should be interactive, interesting, and accurately cover the main points of the reading. I *highly* recommend that you spend about the first five minutes of your presentation going over the thesis of the article and the primary claims. For the rest of your presentation, I encourage you to be creative – feel free to bring in outside material if you'd like. You might break the class into pairs or groups and ask us to talk about certain thought-provoking questions. You might bring in a film or music clip that relates to the article. You might conduct a role-playing activity for the class, or you might organize a structured debate. All pairs are required to meet with me at least two days before your presentation in order to share with me your lesson plans. (Article presentation = 100 points)

(6) Participation: 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!*
(50 total points for participation)

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 are on reserve online at *MyBCC*.

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 Sexualities "Asking Questions About Sex" pp46-51
DUE THURSDAY: Read syllabus and make sure you understand it

WEEK TWO – The Social Construction of Gender

Read Martin's "The Egg and the Sperm" pp23-31 (ON WEBSITE)
 Read Lorber's "Night to His Day: The Social Construction of Gender" (ON WEBSITE)
 Read Nanda's "Hijra and Sathin" 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 WEDNESDAY: SEMINAR ON "NIGHT TO HIS DAY"
DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON "LESBIANS, MEN-WOMEN, & TWO SPIRITS" (bring paper)
DUE THURSDAY: QUIZ on WEEK ONE AND WEEK TWO MATERIAL

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 TUESDAY: SEMINAR ON "THE FIVE SEXES" (bring paper)

WEEK FOUR – The Social Construction of Sexuality

No classes on Thursday, April 23rd

Read Gordon, L. and S. Abbott "The Social Constructionist's 'Essential' Guide to Sex" (ON WEBSITE)
 Read Sexualities "Homosexual' and 'Heterosexual'" pp44-46
 Read Sexualities "The Heterosexual Questionnaire" p136
 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 TUESDAY: SEMINAR ON "THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST'S 'ESSENTIAL' GUIDE TO SEX" (bring paper)
DUE FRIDAY: SEMINAR ON "TWO MANY AND NOT ENOUGH" (bring paper)
DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ on WEEK THREE AND WEEK FOUR MATERIAL

WEEK FIVE – The Social Construction of Racialized Sexualities

Read hooks “Reconstructing Black Masculinity” (ON WEBSITE)

Read West, C. “Black Sexuality: The Taboo Subject” (ON WEBSITE)

Read Hill Collins “The Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood” (ON WEBSITE)

Read Espiritu “The Racial Construction of Asian American Women and Men” (ON WEBSITE)

Read Lee “The Third Sex: Asian American Men in Popular Culture (ON WEBSITE)

DUE MONDAY: SEMINAR ON “BLACK SEXUALITY: THE TABOO SUBJECT” (bring paper)

DUE TUESDAY: SEMINAR ON “THE SEXUAL POLITICS OF BLACK WOMANHOOD” (bring paper)

DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON “THE RACIAL CONSTRUCTION OF ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN AND MEN” (bring paper)

DUE FRIDAY: Exam #1

WEEK SIX – Becoming Sexual

Note: No classes on Friday, May 8th

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 Wyatt “Childhood Messages for African American Women: Gaining Permission to Have Sexual Knowledge” (ON WEBSITE)

Read Sexualities “Dating and Romantic Relationships Among Gay, Lesbian, and Bisexual Youth” pp113-121

Read Sexualities “Faking It” pp266-273

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

DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON “DATING AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS AMONG GAY, LESBIAN, AND BISEXUAL YOUTH”(bring paper)

DUE THURSDAY: QUIZ on WEEK FIVE AND WEEK SIX MATERIAL

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 TUESDAY: SEMINAR ON “PILLS AND POWER TOOLS” (bring paper)

DUE THURSDAY: SEMINAR ON “SOCIOCULTURAL REPRESENTATIONS OF THE VAGINA” (bring paper)

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 WEDNESDAY: SEMINAR ON “THE PLEASURE OF THE PAIN” (bring paper)

DUE WEDNESDAY: QUIZ on WEEK SEVEN AND WEEK EIGHT MATERIAL

WEEK NINE – Sexual Variations: Polyamory/Swinging

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 WEDNESDAY: SEMINAR ON “AGAINST LOVE” (bring paper)

WEEK TEN - Commercial Sex: Exotic Dancing and Prostitution

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

Read Sexualities “Prostitution and Fellatio” pp310-316

Read Sexualities “Fantasy Islands” pp331-341

DUE FRIDAY: SEMINAR ON “FANTASY ISLANDS”

DUE FRIDAY: QUIZ ON WEEK NINE AND WEEK TEN MATERIAL

WEEK ELEVEN – Commercial Sex: Pornography

Read Sexualities “Pornography” p342

Read Sexualities “Sexual Violence in Three Pornographic Media” pp343-351

Read Sexualities “Internet Pornography: A Social Psychological Perspective on Internet Sexuality” pp354-366

Read Sexualities “Pornography and Media” pp369-379

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

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

DUE WEDNESDAY: “THE WORST THING IS THE SCREWING” (bring paper)

THURSDAY: Exam #2

IMPORTANT NOTE: Although we do not have an actual final exam in this class, we will meet during our final exam time on **THURSDAY, June 18th from 9:30-11:20am** in order to hear each other’s research presentations. Please mark your calendars accordingly.