

## **SOC 256: Sex and Sexualities**

**Spring 2017 (online)**

**Bellevue College**

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**Office hours:** by appointment only

### **COURSE INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW**

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.

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

**–Gilbert Chesterton**

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

## **LEARNING ATMOSPHERE**

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

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

**A note about inclusion:** Everyone 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, transpeople, 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, de-humanized, or victimized. It is also unacceptable in this class to 'justify' bigoted attitudes for any reason, including religion. If you are unable to express your beliefs in a non-insulting manner, please keep them to yourself. I think you'll find, however, that with a little practice, you can express your viewpoint in an open, respectful manner. If you have any doubts, feel free to check with me and I'd be happy to help you express yourself responsibly.

**A note about online learning:** Unfortunately (or fortunately, depending upon your perspective!), online classes are not for everyone. In general, they demand far more independent initiative and personal discipline than do classes that meet on campus. Additionally, online classes demand stronger reading and writing skills. If you are a student who likes having someone to keep you on your toes, such as reminding you regularly to keep up with your work, then online classes are probably not a good choice for you. That's okay (it's not a failure on your part!)...some students simply thrive more when working on a "strict" daily routine, the kind of routine that on-campus classes provide. Thus, the students who succeed most at online learning tend to be those students who:

- are disciplined enough to check the course website around five-to-seven days per week;
- have enough personal initiative that they will contact their instructor (that is, me!) if they don't understand something;
- have good to excellent written communication skills;
- are good readers (i.e. they can sit down and focus on a reading, highlighting key concepts/ideas, and then study it well);
- are independent; AND
- have a basic understanding of computer culture and technology (navigating a website, uploading/downloading, discussion etiquette)

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

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

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

## COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES

After completing the course, students should be able to:

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

## REQUIRED TEXTS

“Sex Matters: The Sexuality and Society Reader” by Stompler, Baunach, Simonds, Windsor, and Burgess (4th Edition)

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

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

attention or focusing – in fact, it's a waste of time!) Please know that I am available to assist you with any of the readings. My goal as an instructor is to help you succeed.

## COURSE POLICIES

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

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

**A sincere desire to help you learn.** Since my ultimate goal is to help you learn, I have invested a significant amount of time into the design of this course site, with the hopes that the materials and assignments will enhance your learning. I think this course is understandable, interesting, and engaging, although it's challenging at times for a variety of reasons. However, if at any time you are unclear or unsure about any aspects of the course - including reading material - feel free to contact me for assistance/clarification.

**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 (in your writing) that you understand the material. I don't negotiate final grades.

**Respect and inclusion.** 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. All are welcome!

**The following outlines what I expect of you throughout the quarter:**

**A sincere effort to learn the course material.** I work hard to make this course a success for you, and I expect you to try hard too. When participating in discussions and when writing assignments, 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 keep up with the readings and lectures each week, particularly before contributing to seminar and our course discussion board.

**Promptness.** You should comply with all due dates, as **I do not accept late work. All assignments are due by 11:59pm on the listed due date..NO EXCEPTIONS (that includes computer problems).** You will learn that I am quite a stickler on due dates, so please learn to comply with all deadlines. I highly recommend that you plan to turn in your work early (with plenty of time to spare before the 11:59pm deadline - you can even turn in your work days early!).

I accept assignments ONLY in the following formats: pdf and Word. Do NOT send to me attachments in other formats. Submitting your work to me in other formats will result in a **ZERO** grade.

You can submit your work to me in the following ways:

(1) by uploading your work to Canvas (on the assignments pages themselves), or

(2) IN THE CASE OF AN EMERGENCY ONLY (such as you cannot access Canvas), you can email your work to me at my Bellevue College address. [denise.johnson@bellevuecollege.edu](mailto:denise.johnson@bellevuecollege.edu)

**It is your job to get your work in on time.**

Every student should have a “back up plan” for what you will do if you have computer problems. **Please note that you are responsible for getting your work in on time REGARDLESS of the state of your computer/browser or your Internet Service Provider (ISP).** All late work will receive a zero grade. Due dates are indicated on the “Calendar” link at the top of the course website, so it is extremely important for you to stay on top of the Calendar.

**Contribution.** Learning about each others' 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. This is why you are required to contribute to class discussions. Please be advised that your grade will suffer if you do not participate and contribute to the intellectual life of our class.

**Respect, courtesy, 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 or 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 OR from the Newman book. Please do not copy and paste material from wikipedia or any other website into your assignments, as this is a severe form of cheating (that is very easy to catch, by the way). **If you cheat/plagiarize on any portion of a quiz, you'll receive a zero grade for the entire quiz.** *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 is in the course textbook and supplementary readings.* In fact, **if you do outside research in this class, you will lose points.** I dock points for this because: (a) information on the Internet is often misleading and/or inaccurate and (b) I need to make sure that you understand OUR TEXTBOOK (which is, after all, sociological!). If you have any hesitation, or if you are in doubt about one of these issues, feel free to ask me.

## GRADING

Final course grades are based on the following point breakdown:

Quizzes/Exams (2 @ 200pts each)	400 points
Discussion participation (10 @ 20pts each)	200 points
Essays (6 @ 30pts each)	180 points
Seminar Assignments (6 @ 20pts each)	120 points
Fieldwork Paper	100 points
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1000 points</b>

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

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

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

F = 0-599 points

The following is a description of the course grade components:

(1) **Quizzes/exams:** Two quizzes/exams are given over the course of the quarter, one at roughly the middle of the quarter and one at the end. These may consist of multiple choice, true/false, short answer, and/or essay questions. These quizzes are “open book,” so you are permitted to refer to the textbook for help. However, these quizzes are intended to be independent work, so **you are not permitted to work on the quizzes with your classmates**. I am holding you to the Honor Code on this, so if one of your classmates contacts you for help or assistance on a quiz, please politely decline them and then let me know that your classmate is contacting others. I generally post quizzes about a week before they are due; that will allow you to work on them when it is most convenient for you. However, once you begin working on a quiz, there will be a ninety-minute time limit to finish it. Please note that **I do not give make-up quizzes**, so if you miss one, you will receive a zero grade. PLEASE DO NOT WAIT UNTIL THE LAST MINUTE TO COMPLETE YOUR QUIZZES IN THIS CLASS. Please also review the Calendar link at the top of the site to see due dates. Plan ahead! **(NOTE: Checking the calendar link frequently is one of the keys to success in this class – EVERYTHING that is due is posted for you there!)**

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

(3) **Seminar:** We will have six “virtual” seminars over the course of the quarter. Seminar involves discussing a specific reading and completing a brief assignment in small groups in order to reach deeper levels of learning. I will assign students randomly to groups. This will be your quarter-long Seminar Group (although I reserve the right to re-assign groups, particularly if a group has become dysfunctional). For each seminar, you will work in this group, having discussions with your group members and completing a brief group assignment. Details about the structure of seminar tasks and assignments are described in the Seminar Assignments themselves (which can be found through the “Modules” link). I HIGHLY recommend that seminar groups begin working on seminar well before the assignment is due, so that you can accommodate all of your group members' busy life schedules. (Remember that many students enrolled in this class work full-time, are raising families, are traveling, and so on.) Each seminar, students can earn up to 20 points for the quality of their work. *Please be advised that not all seminar group members automatically receive the same grade – students who participate less will receive lowered grades. This is how I grade seminar: I review your group's written assignment and assign it a grade (for example, 20 out of 20). Then, I visit your group's Seminar Discussion threads, to see who contributed and participated in a meaningful way. Those students will receive the highest grade in the group (in this example, they'd receive 20s). Students who participate a little might receive 10s, and those who don't participate at all would receive zeros.*



(4) **Essays:** You will complete six essays throughout the quarter that require you to reflect on the course material and/or observe the social world. You should do your best to address every essay question thoughtfully, clearly, and completely, as you can earn up to 30 points for each essay. These essays will be graded not only on their completeness (Did you adequately address all the components of the assignment?), but also on their thoughtfulness (Does your essay show that you understand and thought hard about the course material/readings? Do you connect your answer to the course readings?). PLEASE DO NOT ATTEMPT THESE ESSAYS WITHOUT FIRST COMPLETING THE READINGS AND WATCHING THE LECTURES - I will definitely be able to tell if you are "shooting from the hip" rather than relying on what you've read to help you with the assignment. And again, PLEASE DO NOT DO "INTERNET RESEARCH" FOR THESE ESSAYS – you should rely **solely** on the lectures, videos, and course readings (if you rely on other sources, your grade will suffer as I need to ensure that you understand our book, which is far more reliable than much of the Internet). Essays vary in length - most are roughly 500 words, although some are 750-1000 words. Please note that **I will not accept late essays**, so work that is not handed in on time will receive a zero grade. Remember, the due time for EVERYTHING in this class is **11:59pm**.

(5) **Discussion Participation:** Each week, you will participate in large class discussions on the "Discussions" link (on the lefthand side of the course website). It is your responsibility, as a member of our class, to respond thoughtfully not only to my prompt(s), but also to your classmates' comments. You are required to participate thoroughly in each week's discussion(s), as your grade will be based on the quality of your contributions and your level of involvement. In order to receive high grades on your discussion, you will need to:

(a) make an initial post about the topic in the first couple of days of the week (you will notice that each discussion has two due dates - one due date for your initial post, and another due date for your follow-up posts/responses) - your initial post should rely upon the readings and videos, demonstrating to me that you know the material, and;

(b) respond to AT LEAST 2-4 of your classmates' posts throughout the week (i.e. contribute something intellectually meaningful).

In other words, you will need to make a TOTAL of 3-5 **high-quality** posts each week- one will be your initial post (to my discussion prompt) and then the rest will be your responses to what others have said. I have set up the weekly discussions so that you cannot see what others have posted until you've made your own initial post first. Also **your initial post will be due by 11:59pm on Wednesday of each week, and your follow-up posts/responses will be due by 11:59pm on Sunday of each week.**

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

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

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

- Say something that will *contribute* to a *meaningful* discussion--this requires *time and thought*! Thoroughly reflect on and think about the point you are making.
- Fully explain and elaborate your points, using examples, evidence and logic to explain. Rely on evidence whenever possible, as this course is a social science course, and you are learning the social science perspective. Speak with precision regarding your meaning, rather than being vague or general.
- Respond to the topic, not the author. This does not mean you should ignore the person who wrote the original post, but it means you need to focus on the ideas in the post and how to further the conversation on the topic, not tell the author what you think of his or her post.
- Place your reaction in the context of the discussion. Make sure that you clearly connect your response to the week's (or previous weeks') themes.
- Minimize prejudices, biases, unfounded beliefs, and too much reliance on emotional reactions, which can sidetrack good sound judgment and opinions rooted in your learning and in the sociological perspective. It is easy for bias, belief and emotion to dominate a discussion because we have existing emotions around the topic at hand, or because we fall prey to "reductionism" (seeing individuals as causes of their predicaments, which have social roots and solutions).
- Feel free to be personal and interpersonal on the threads, in addition to substantive discussion. This aspect of discussion helps the group bond as a community. Remember, too, that you will apply many of the topics to your own social worlds. Be careful, however, not to go WAY off on a personal tangent--stay focused on the topic. If you want to carry on a more personal discussion, use the "other" forum on the discussion site. The assignment forums are reserved for analyzing the assignment of the week.

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

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

**The Disability Resource Center serves students with a wide array of learning challenges and disabilities. If you are a student who has a disability or learning challenge for which**

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

## College Anti-Discrimination Statement (Title IX)

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

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