

**SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY  
WMST/SOCY 1006  
Fall 2005**

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**You are responsible for everything in this syllabus, your recitation syllabus, the texts, the course packet, the registration handbook, and material covered in class. This includes knowing and managing due dates, changes in the tentative schedule, and assignments. The syllabus and all information in the course packet are testable materials.**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This is an introductory course in the sociological study of sexualities. We'll be examining human sexual desires, experiences, and meanings held in common in a historical and cultural context that takes into account larger trends and social influences.

For the purposes of this course, the theoretical assumptions of social constructionism frame our inquiry and understanding of human sexual phenomena. Throughout the course we will read, discuss, and entertain ideas from queer, feminist, and radical perspectives on sexuality for the express purpose of challenging our taken for granted assumptions about "what's so." Through these controversial and sometimes difficult (emotionally as well as intellectually) readings and discussions, we will be engaging in a critical inquiry into the popular and scientific versions of sexual reality.

We will also discuss the stratification system of contemporary US society where it intersects with our cultural assumptions and values regarding sexual identity and expression and the larger "American values" that include equality of respect and opportunity for all people and the belief that people deserve life, liberty, and the freedom to pursue happiness in a way that does not interfere with others' rights and liberties. In doing this we will be identifying instances of discrepancies between what we say (ideal) and how we act (real) as we structure our society through policies, practices, institutions, rituals, and social control at the collective level and in our individual everyday choices and interactions. The intention of this inquiry and the larger context of this class is alignment of our vision of a just society with our everyday actions.

**COURSE TEXTS**

**Textbooks are available at Word Is Out bookstore, 2015 10<sup>th</sup> Street, 303.449.1415.**

*The Good Vibrations Guide to Sex* by Cathy Winks and Anne Semans 2002.

This text is a great reference for information about the body, health, communication, and sexual information. This is required for everyone in the class.

*The Good Vibrations Guide to Adult Videos* by Cathy Winks. 1998.

This text is required if you are renting an adult video for your activity paper. You will be required to reference it in that paper. It's inexpensive and a great resource for selecting adult films.

Course Packet: available through CU book store. This packet contains the syllabus, information on paper options and guidelines for writing your paper, campus and community resources for sexual issues and questions, and most of the readings for the class.

**DISABILITY STATEMENT**

If you have specific physical, psychiatric, or learning disabilities and require accommodations, please let us know by the end of the third week of the semester so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation of your disability to the Disability Services Office in Willard 322 at 303.492.8671.

## **CLASS PARTICIPATION**

Your participation in class discussion is encouraged. You are welcome to ask questions at any time or even take us a bit off track in discussion. If something is interesting and important to the class, I do not mind getting off the subject. You are expected to respect each other, your TA, and me. In this class, we will most assuredly express strong opinions and argue over some points. We critique ideas not people. No one should be made to feel as if they are being attacked personally over something they express in class.

You can respect other students by listening attentively when they are speaking, not rudely interrupting anyone speaking and by not making hurtful insults and/or comments that may silence other people in the class by declaring whole groups of people wrong/criminal/sinful/sick because of ethnicity, religion, politics, gender, ability, age, appearance, consensual sexual choices or decisions about when, why, what, where and with whom to or not to engage in sexual activities. We will be discussing how those attitudes and the enforcement of those opinions have operated to deny some people the kind of opportunities and life that most of us expect and demand. You are encouraged to say whatever is there for you to say, being responsible for the effect your words will have on others. As a theme in this class we will also be discussing how words are social actions themselves, products and tools that both enforce and are reflective of existing power and privilege inequities.

## **Instructor participation (teaching style and language)**

The social constructionist perspective is founded on the principle that the language we use creates our reality and experience of the world in which we live. This class is about sexuality as it is experienced in the everyday world rather than the world of experts and doctors. Because of this, we will consciously use language to uncover the implicit meanings about sexuality and gender and how words are used to create our common understanding of sexuality. We will not only be "thinking sex" in this class, we will be talking sex too. Anyone who does not wish to participate in a classroom where sexuality, identity, behavior, desire, and sexualized parts of the body are discussed in "common" language is encouraged to seek alternative courses. This is a difficult class in many ways. In my opinion, it demonstrates a high level of maturity to recognize your limits of comfort and what you are willing to take on this semester and act appropriately as quickly as possible.

## **COURSE OBJECTIVES**

- **Provide accurate sources of information about sexuality, practice examining sexual phenomena consciously from the social constructionist and essentialist perspectives, and offer opportunities for developing our ability to evaluate new information, research, and the opinions held by others and ourselves**
  - Gain an understanding of the essentialist and social constructionist perspectives—as theoretical perspectives, and the assumptions both are based on, as they are employed in biological, psychological, and sociological explanations of sexuality and gender.
  - Critically examine heterosexuality as an institutionalized practice within society, with emphasis on the supporting institutions and ideologies that perpetuate this as a "pattern of interaction," the techniques of social control that are utilized within this institution, the resulting stratification effects, the potential and actual changes occurring within this institution and sources of those changes.
- **Get practical personal benefits out of this class—grow and develop as an adult.**
- Achieve a broader understanding of the sociocultural dimensions of human sexualities with increased appreciation of the possible and manifest variation in human expression of desire, intimacy, pleasure, and love.
- To be knowledgeable, appreciative, and proud of our bodies as sources of pleasure and beauty.
- To be able to discuss sexual matters with appropriate levels of sensitivity, respect, comfort, and humor (because let's face it, talking about sex can be fun—and funny).
- To realize and clarify our individual sense of sexual self, individual way of being comfortably and morally sexual, and sexual decision making process—as always, within a sociological perspective.

- **Get practical “professional” benefits--develop skills that will assist in your success in university life and beyond**
- Demonstrate the accomplishment of the above insights on tests, papers, and in class discussions according to academic style and standards. This gives us the opportunity to evaluate your integration of material on several levels, and you learn, among other things, how to play the game you are in the midst of called University degree seeker.

**EVALUATION COMPONENTS**

**Tests:** Two multiple-choice exams. They are weighted more heavily as the semester progresses so if you improve, it will be reflected in your grade (45 pts, 65 pts). There are no early or late exams. It is your responsibility to be in attendance on exam day. If you miss an exam unexpectedly, you must contact your instructor by phone or e-mail within 24 hours or you will be given a zero for that score. If you cannot take a test at the scheduled time, you will be given an essay exam that predictably takes 8-12 hours to complete. It is in your best interest to be at the exams.

**Activity Paper:** One 5 page activity paper will be due by 4pm on Monday Nov 28. Guidelines for this paper are detailed in the course packet and should be followed carefully. Late papers will not be accepted (100 pts).

**Reflection and Synthesis short papers:** Two 2-3 page papers due on exam days will address synthesizing your thoughts and observations about sexuality in “real life” with your response and analysis of course material (30 pts each)

**Learning Journal:** more specific details to follow. You’ll assess your own and my efforts and success in meeting the learning objectives set out in the syllabus and created by you (40 pts)

**Final:** comprehensive multiple-choice final (90 pts).

**Point Distribution:**

Tests (45, 65)	110
R and S papers	60
Learning journal	40
Activity Paper	100
Final	<u>90</u>
Total	400

Grading follows the standard percentages for letter grades, and there is no curving of tests or final scores. I have found this actually works out to students’ advantage over other methods. You are strongly encouraged to come discuss/argue test questions that you feel you answered correctly, but missed. This has the dual benefit of improving your argument and communication skills and may even earn you extra points. If you want to discuss my reasoning, methods, or any other aspect of class or life please come see me (I love to talk pedagogy).

**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE**-SUBJECT TO CHANGES ANNOUNCED IN CLASS  
(CP-Course Packet, GV – Good Vibrations Guide to Sex, CP *listings are by author and title*)

**Note: this is scheduled out for a twice a week class. If we are unable to change our schedule all readings for the week should be completed by Monday's class. Monday topics and activities will occur during the first half of class and Wednesday's will be discussed in the second half of class.**

Monday, August 22

Topic – Introduction  
Read – syllabus and CP: informational pages

Wednesday, August 24

Topic – Course context –Choosing vs being a victim of circumstance  
Read – GV chapter 2, CP: Steele "Introduction"

**Opportunity to turn in course agreements**

Monday, August 29—

**Last day to turn in course agreement or you will be dropped from the course!**

Topic –How do we know what we know? It's all perspective.  
Read – CP Ericksen and Steffen "Asking Questions About Sex" and  
Heasley and Crane "Learning to Think Critically About Sexuality"

Wednesday, August 31

Topic – Why Study Sexuality from a sociological perspective?  
Read – CP: Ransom "Navigating Sex, Sexuality, and Christian Values"

Monday, Sept 5

**Labor Day Holiday—no classes held**

Wednesday, Sept 7—

**We will read and discuss this article next Monday if we are only meeting once a week**

Topic – A Radical Perspective: You want me to read how much?!?!?!  
Read – CP: Rubin "Thinking Sex"

Monday, Sept 12

Topic – Stratification, Privilege and American Values  
Read – CP: MacIntosh – "White Privilege..."

Wednesday, Sept 14

Topic- How this social control idea impacts real people  
Read – CP: Nestle "My Mother Liked to Fuck"

Monday, Sept 19

Topic – Theoretical Perspectives: essentialism and social construction  
Read – CP: Steele "Doing It"

Wednesday, Sept 21

Topic – how theoretical perspectives influence our "count"  
Read – CP: Christina – "Are We Having Sex Now or What?"

Monday, Sept 26 -- **View: Viva La Vulva (SEM)\***

Topic – Language, Pleasure, Bodies, and Social Control  
Read – GV chapter 3 and CP: Tiefer "medicine, Morality, and the Public Mgmt..."

Wednesday, Sept 28

Topic – STI Panics  
Read – GV chapter 19 and CP: Schneider and Jenness "Sex and the SC of STDs"

Monday, Oct 3

Topic – Outside the charmed circle: pornographers, predators, and perverts

Read – CP: Abbott "Creating a Scene" and Sheiner "Odyssey of a Feminist Pornographer"

Wednesday, Oct 5 –

Topic – Wrap up and Review

Monday, Oct 10 – **TEST ONE—BRING A #2 PENCIL!**

**DUE: Reflection and Synthesis Short Paper in my hand by 4pm**

Wednesday, Oct 12 -- **View: Sexually Explicit Material\*\* Adult Film collage**

Topic – You say porn, I say erotica, let's call the whole thing SEM

Read – GV chapters 15 and 20

Monday, Oct 17

Topic – Scripting Theory

Read – CP: Mahay et al "Race, Gender, and Class in Sexual Scripts"

Wednesday, Oct 19

Topic – Taking gendered scripts into the bedroom (DCS for masculine and feminine sexuality)

Read – CP: Stoltenberg "How Men Have (a) Sex" and Lim-Hing "Dragon Ladies, Snow..."

Monday, Oct 24--**Last Day to report final exam conflicts and appeal for alternatives**

Topic – How to have sex the RIGHT way (according to the DCS for ideal sex)!

Read –CP: Roberts et al "Faking It: The Story of Ohh" and

Seidman "The Sexualization of Love"

Wednesday, Oct 26

Topic – Heterosexuality as identity and institution

Read – GV chapter 4 and CP: Messner "Becoming 100 percent Straight" and

Rochlin "Heterosexual Questionnaire"

Monday, Oct 31

Topic – Deconstructing (and challenging) hegemonic Heterosexuality

Read – CP: Ingraham "Ritualizing Heterosexuality: Weddings as Performance"and

Wolf "Radical Heterosexuality"

Wednesday, Nov 2

Topic – Heterosexual privilege—costs for everyone

Read – CP: Herold "The *Straightjacket* of my Homophobia" and het priv supplements

Monday, Nov 7

Topic – The sociological perspective on sexual coercion and consent

Read – CP: Struckman-Johnson et al "Tactics of Sexual Coercion" and

Reeves Sanday "Rape-Prone vs Rape-Free Campus Cultures"

Wednesday, Nov 9

Topic – Sexism, Racism, and Rape Panic

Read – Dowd Hall "The Mind That Burns in Each Body" and

Beneke "Men on Rape: What They Have to Say about Sexual Violence"

Monday, Nov 14

Topic – Transforming sexual scripts

Read – CP: Crowley "The Lie of Entitlement" and hooks "Seduced by Violence No More"

Wednesday, Nov 16

Topic – wrap up and review

Read – study guide

Monday, Nov 21-- **Test 2—Bring a #2 pencil!**

**DUE: Reflection and Synthesis Short Paper in my hand by 4pm**

Wednesday, Nov 23

**No Class—attend your Friday classes on this day**

Monday, Nov 28

**Activity Paper Due in my hand or mail box by 4pm**

Topic – BDSM: reinforcing and challenging hegemonic heterosexuality

Read – CP: BDSM supplements, Queen "Over a Knee Willingly" and GV chapter 17

**Tentative BD/SM Presentation\*\***

Tuesday Nov 29, 7-9 PM Duane G1B20

Anyone attending this special presentation (class members and their guests) is required to do the reading for Nov 28 in order to prepare for the presentation.

Wednesday, Nov 30

Topic – Variations, social control, and social change

Read – CP: Califia's "Sluts in Utopia" and Moore "Sex (American Style)"

Monday, Dec 5

Topic – Sex Pioneer, who me?

Read – Justice "I have a Dream"

Wednesday, Dec 7

Topic – overview of class themes, FCQs, and wrap up

**Final Exam noon (010) lecture: Saturday, Dec 10, 10:30am-1pm EKLC E1B20**

**Final Exam 1pm (020) lecture: Friday, Dec 9, 7:30-10am EKLC E1B20**

**Final Exam 2pm (030) lecture: Saturday, Dec 10, 1:30-4pm EKLC E1B20**

**Final Exam 4pm (070) lecture: Wednesday, Dec 14, 10:30 am-1pm HLMS 199**

**Alternate time for conflicts (must sign up by Oct 24): Monday Dec 12 –**

**Location and time TBA**

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\*SEM (Sexually Explicit Material) – sexually explicit images in video format or photographs that show exposed genitals and/or explicit sexual activity. Your attendance is NOT required, BUT you are responsible for any material discussed that day. Please see a class member for notes or meet with your TA.

\*\*BDSM presentation – This presentation will involve a discussion of BDSM practices and philosophy as well as a safety demonstration of some techniques by members of the Colorado Scene. We do NOT allow any cameras or recording devices of any kind during this presentation in order to protect the confidentiality of the guest speakers.