

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY SOCY/WMST 1006 FALL 2014

Instructor: Matthew Brown

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Office Hours: Tu 11 – 12 (Kitteredge West N130) & Th 11 – 12 (12 Ketchum Hall)

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You are responsible for everything in the registration handbook, this syllabus, recitation syllabus, the text, and material covered in lecture.

COURSE DESCRIPTION

This course investigates sexuality using a constructionist framework to critically engage with essentialistic and biologically determinist perspectives, dominant in Western society, regarding sexual identity and sexual expression. Contemporary sexual identity, desire, behavior, health, research, and expert advice will be viewed as outcomes and techniques of social control. We will explore the construction of heterosexuality, homosexuality, femininity, and masculinity as they impact our cultural and individual understandings of sexuality. Throughout the course we will be examining and analyzing our own and others' sexualities in a sociological perspective of larger trends and social influences. We will also discuss the sexual basis and consequences of the stratification system in place in this society currently with an emphasis on identifying erotic injustice and oppression.

UNIVERSITY POLICIES

Honor Code

All students of the University of Colorado at Boulder are responsible for knowing and adhering to the academic integrity policy of this institution. Violations of this policy may include: cheating, plagiarism, aid of academic dishonesty, fabrication, lying, bribery, and threatening behavior. All incidents of academic misconduct shall be reported to the Honor Code Council (honor@colorado.edu; 303-735-2273). Students who are found to be in violation of the academic integrity policy will be subject to both academic sanctions from the faculty member and non-academic sanctions (including but not limited to university probation, suspension, or expulsion). Other information on the Honor Code can be found at <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/honor.html> and at <http://honorcode.colorado.edu>

Honor code violations will result in a 0 for the assignment at a minimum and may also result in failing this course, probation, or expulsion.

Classroom Behavior

Students and faculty each have responsibility for maintaining an appropriate learning environment. Those who fail to adhere to such behavioral standards may be subject to discipline. Professional courtesy and sensitivity are especially important with respect to individuals and topics dealing with differences of race, color, culture, religion, creed, politics, veteran's status, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and gender expression, age, disability, and nationalities. Class rosters are provided to the instructor with the student's legal name. I will gladly honor your request to address you by an alternate name or gender pronoun. Please advise me of this preference early in the semester so that I may make appropriate changes to my records. **See policies at**

<http://www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html> and at http://www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/judicialaffairs/code.html#student_code

I DO NOT ALLOW COMPUTERS (IPADS OR LAPTOPS) IN CLASS.

Discrimination and Harassment

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. The University of Colorado does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, or veteran status in admission and access to, and treatment and employment in, its educational programs and activities. (Regent Law, Article 10, amended 11/8/2001). CU-Boulder will not tolerate acts of discrimination or harassment based upon Protected Classes or related retaliation against or by any employee or student. For purposes of this CU-Boulder policy, "Protected Classes" refers to race, color, national origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, or veteran status. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Discrimination and Harassment (ODH) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the ODH, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be obtained at <http://hr.colorado.edu/dh/>

Religious Holidays

Campus policy regarding religious observances requires that faculty make every effort to deal reasonably and fairly with all students who, because of religious obligations, have conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. Talk with me to make arrangements that allow you to observe and a complete the assignment. See full details at http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html

Students with Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter to me from Disability Services in a timely manner so that your needs may be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities (Contact: 303-492-8671, Willard 322, www.colorado.edu/disabilityservices).

COURSE TEXTS

Required:

The Social Construction of Sexuality. 2009. 3rd Ed. Edited by Matthew C. Brown.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Your 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 exploring it further. 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 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 opportunities and resources 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 with the power to enforce power relations and are reflective of existing power and privilege inequities.

My participation (teaching style and language)

The constructionist perspective is founded on the principle that language 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, I 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, explicit language is encouraged to seek alternative courses. This is a difficult class at multiple levels (level of comprehension and integration of material required for tests as well as dealing with strong emotional reactions to course content and presentation styles). 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

- Gain an understanding of the essentialist and constructionist perspectives, and the assumptions both are based on, as they are employed in biological, psychological, and sociological explanations of sexuality and gender;
- Provide an understanding of social influences on the individual experience and meaning of sexuality and foster an ability to employ the sociological imagination;
- Critically examine hegemonic sexuality, with an emphasis on the supporting ideologies that perpetuate this as a “natural expression,” the techniques and agents of social control that support these ideologies, the resulting stratification effects, the potential and actual changes occurring within hegemonic sexuality and sources of those changes;
- 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;
- Demonstrate the accomplishment of the above insights on tests, papers, and in-class discussions according to academic style and standards.

Rules of the Game

- Please arrive in the classroom and be prepared to begin on time. Please stay for the entire class period.
- Please turn off phones and beepers or switch to vibrate if you have a childcare or emergency situation.
- Please participate in the main conversation by being attentive, abstaining from reading other materials, and not carrying on side conversations during class.
- The D2L page for this class is an official forum for posting updates and presentation information, so please check it regularly during the semester.

- If you have any suggestions, feedback, or some aspect of the course requirements or material is not clear, let me know.
- **I DO NOT ALLOW COMPUTERS IN CLASS (Ipads or laptops).**

EVALUATION COMPONENTS

Three Exams: Three 50-question multiple-choice exams will be given during the semester. Each exam is worth 50 points. Rescheduling an exam will incur a 10% deduction from your exam score, so plan accordingly.

Save all graded work for this course. If you do not have the original graded copy of your work, you cannot challenge your final course grade after the semester is over.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

WEEK 1

- 8/26 Topic – Introduction & Course Expectations
Read – “Exploring Human Sexuality”
- 8/28 Topic – Basic Sociological Concepts and Social Control
Read – “White Privilege, Male Privilege”

WEEK 2

- 9/2 Topic – Reading Media Representations
Read – “Rereading Sex & the City”
View – *Cultural Criticism and Transformation*
- 9/4 Topic – What is sexuality? Why study sexuality? Sexuality Pioneers
Read – “Are We Having Sex Now or What?” and “Understanding Human Sexuality”
Due – Course Agreement Form

WEEK 3

- 9/9 Topic – Assumptions of Essentialism
Read – “In the Beginning: Nature”
- 9/11 Topic – Assumptions of Constructionism
Read – “Is There a History of Sexuality?”

WEEK 4

- 9/16 Topic – History of Sexual Distinctions
Read – “Homosexual and Heterosexual”
- 9/18 **Review**

WEEK 5

- 9/23 **EXAM ONE**
- 9/25 Topic – Radical Theory of Sexuality
Read – “Thinking Sex”

WEEK 6

- 9/30 Topic – Charmed Circle and Democratic Morality
Read – “Thinking Sex”
- 10/2 Topic – Panic Discourse and Moral Contagion Model
Read – “Heterocopulative Syndrome” and “Sexually Transmitted Diseases”

WEEK 7

- 10/7 Topic – Panic Discourse and Moral Contagion Model
Read – “Heterocopulative Syndrome” and “Sexually Transmitted Diseases”
- 10/9 Topic – Hegemonic Masculine Sexuality
Read – “Rock Hudson’s Body”

WEEK 8

- 10/14 Topic – Hegemonic Feminine Sexuality
Read – “The Egg and the Sperm”
- 10/16 Topic – Hegemonic Sexual Script & Heteronormativity
Read – “Atypical Sexual Behavior”

WEEK 9

- 10/21 **Review**
- 10/23 **EXAM TWO**

WEEK 10

- 10/28 Topic – Disruptions I: Transgressive Bodies
Read – “All Together Now” and “Our Cunts Are Not the Same”
View: *Viva La Vulva and Private Dicks**
- 10/30 Topic – Disruptions II: Transgressive Desires
Read – “In Praise of Strap-Ons”

WEEK 11

- 11/4 Topic – Disruptions III: Imperialism and the Sexual “Other”
View – *The Life and Times of Sara Baartman*
- 11/6 Topic – Disruptions III: Science and the Sexual “Other”
Read – “Racism and Research”

WEEK 12

- 11/11 Topic – Disruptions IV: Sexual Coercion and Rape Culture
Read – “Tactics of Sexual Coercion”
- 11/13 Topic – Rape Panic Consequences
Read – “Sexual Coercion” and “It’s Only a Penis”

WEEK 13

- 11/18 Topic – Rape Panic Consequences
Read – “Sexual Coercion” and “It’s Only a Penis”
- 11/20 Topic – Guest Speaker: **The BDSM Scene (Evening and place TBD)****

WEEK 15

12/2 Topic - Disruption V: Feminism & BDSM

Read – “Over a Knee Willingly”

12/4 Topic – Disruption VI: Sex Trafficking

Read— “Sex For Sale” and TBD

WEEK 16

12/9 Topic – Sexual Utopia?

Read – “My Mother Liked to Fuck” and “Sluts in Utopia”

12/11 **Review**

FINAL: Sunday, December 14 4:30 - 7:00 PM

*SEM (Sexually Explicit Material) – sexually explicit images in video format or photographs that show exposed genitals. Your attendance is NOT required, BUT you are responsible for any material discussed that day. If you do not attend you will need to see a class member for notes, your TA, or me.

**BDSM presentation – This presentation will involve a discussion of BD/SM practices and philosophy as well as a safety demonstration of some techniques by members of the Colorado Scene. I do NOT allow any cameras or recording devices of any kind during this presentation in order to protect the confidentiality of the guest speakers. The first half of the presentation will be an examination of the history and values of the Scene. The second half is the safety demonstration and your attendance is NOT required. If you do not attend you will need to see a class member for notes, your TA, or me.