SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY
WMST/SOCY 1006
Spring 2015

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When you email either of us, PLEASE do so with this subject line: SOCY1006 if you expect a response. Glenda checks email Monday-Friday throughout the day but usually not after 4:30pm. Don’t expect a response until the next day if you email me after that time or until Monday if you email me over the weekend. Kendra

You are responsible for everything in this syllabus, your recitation syllabus, the texts, the material on website, and material and announcements covered in class. This includes knowing and managing due dates, changes in the tentative schedule, and assignments. The syllabus and all supplemental info 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 various perspectives on sexuality grounded within a sociological understanding 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 in contemporary US society where it intersects with our cultural assumptions and values regarding sexual identity and expression. We will be analyzing how this compares with our stated and generally agreed upon “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 discussing instances of discrepancies between what we say (ideals) and how we act (realization) 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 opportunity provided through the assigned reading material and the class discussions is in working toward alignment of our vision of a “good society” with our everyday actions.

COURSE TEXTS AND RESOURCES

There are some optional texts available at the bookstore that are excellent resources for sexual health, pleasure, etc. You may also see me for suggested reading in specific topics.

D2L course site –syllabus, writing guidelines, assignments, study guides, and readings arranged by week are all available here

Course Policies and Environment:

- You are responsible for material and announcements presented during all lectures and recitation meetings. It is your responsibility to get missed notes and updates from fellow students-NOT the instructor. If a due date or other administrative changes are announced, that will supersede the “tentative schedule” found in this syllabus.

- Please do not arrive late or leave early or begin to pack up prior to the end of lecture or discussion. This inhibits other students’ ability to hear and understand the material.

- Please turn off cell phone ringers, and avoid engaging in side talking, reading, sleeping, texting, or surfing while in class. This is disrespectful of other students and the instructors and disruptive to the
learning community. If I notice you doing any of these things the possible reactions range from polite requests to cease to light public ridicule to being asked to leave the room.

- No early or late exams will be given other than on the day of the exam. If you know you will be unable to take an exam on the day scheduled for any reason (religious, university event, or any other reason), please let me know as soon as possible to arrange for the essay makeup or other alternative. If you miss an exam, you have 24 hours to inform your instructor and then you will be given a take-home essay exam that typically takes 8-10 hours to complete. If you do not inform your instructor within 24 hours of missing an exam you will be given a zero for that score. It is in your best interest to be at scheduled exams. Please check the syllabus now to determine if there are any conflicts you need to discuss with me.

- Late papers and assignments are not accepted. Exceptions to this policy may be granted for unforeseen and emergency circumstances and carry a point penalty.

- If you require certain accommodations because of a disability, please let me know by the end of the third week so that your learning needs may be appropriately met. You will need to provide documentation from Disability Services (Willard 322 303-492-8671 www.colorado.edu/sacs/disabilityservices)

- If you have any schedule conflicts with the final exam, please let your instructor know by Monday, March 3. If you have time conflicts with other tests, due dates, or known absences let me know by email as soon as possible.

- We (instructors and students) are expected to adhere to the behavior standards listed in the Rights and Responsibilities Regarding Standards of Conduct. The specific policy may be found at www.colorado.edu/policies/classbehavior.html

- Both students and faculty are expected to abide by the University’s honor code. The specifics can be found at www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode. Cheating and plagiarizing will result in a failing grade. Any questions? Information on what constitutes these behaviors can be found in the honor code document.

- Sexual harassment is not tolerated. For more information on maintaining a fair and safe environment and sexual harassment policies and reporting see www.colorado.edu/sexualharassment or call the Office of Sexual harassment at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Judicial Affairs at 303-492-5550.

- Please keep all returned exams (and other returned work) in the event that you have a grade dispute at the end of the semester. If your calculation of your grade does not match our records, it is your responsibility to provide proof of graded work.

CLASS PARTICIPATION

Your participation in class discussion is encouraged. It really is only as interesting as you make it. You are welcome to ask questions at any time or make connections between material and other issues or current events. If something is interesting and important to the class, I do not mind getting off the subject. I do ask that we do our best to maintain an atmosphere of true inquiry where we engage ideas and events and opinions in an attempt to understand more deeply ourselves, our world, and others. 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 speaking with the intention of deepening your understanding and sharing your insights and feelings about what is important to you. You are encouraged to say whatever is there for you to say, being responsible for the effect your words have on others. As a theme in this class we will 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**

1. **I will:** Provide accurate sources of information about sexuality, opportunities to practice examining sexual phenomena consciously from the social constructionist and essentialist perspectives, and opportunities to develop our ability to consider and evaluate new information, research, and the opinions held by others and ourselves.

**You/We will:**
- 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.

2. **We will:** Get practical personal benefits out of this class—grow and develop as adults.
- 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.
- Have the opportunity to become more knowledgeable, appreciative, and proud of our bodies as sources of pleasure and beauty.
- Get some practice “living proudly in a body [and relationships] of one’s own design” to quote Feinberg (1999).
- Expand our capacities 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).
- Realize and clarify each of our own individual sense of sexual self, our own way of being sexual with integrity (in the engineering sense of the word), and sexual decision making process—as always, within a sociological perspective. This is the key to the “secret promise,” by the way.

3. **You will:** 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 and one comprehensive final exam. They are weighted more heavily as the semester progresses so if you improve, it will be reflected in your grade (40 pts, 80 pts, 120 pts). There are no early or late exams. If you miss an exam unexpectedly, you must contact your instructor or TA by 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 out of class essay exam that predictably takes 8-12 hours to complete.

**Participation:** Based in part on attendance and part on evaluations of in-class activities and assignments.

**Paper:** There are numerous options to choose from involving some activity or opportunity to observe some aspect of sexuality in a sociological context and connect your observations with class material and readings. Due date on syllabus and full description and grading rubric available on D2L. 100 pts
Point Distribution:
Tests (40, 80) 120  Grading follows a standard % cut-off for letter grades.
Final 120  I don’t curve tests or final scores. I have found that this
participation 30  actually works out to students’ advantage over other
paper 100  methods.
Total 370

You are strongly encouraged to come discuss/argue test questions, grades, pedagogy, or whatever. 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.

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE-SUBJECT TO CHANGES ANNOUNCED IN CLASS-
  Reading - on D2L by week

For your own benefit and the liveliness of discussion please have the readings completed before class on Tuesday or the day indicated for the week they are assigned.

Week One 1/13  Opportunity to turn in course agreements on Thursday
  Topic – Intro to course and framework of course.
  Read –syllabus, tips for reading, test taking, and writing guidelines and Week 1 readings online

Week Two 1/20- Thursday, 1/22, Last day to turn in course agreement.
  You will be dropped by 1pm if not turned in!
  Topic - Bad faith, Social Control, Stratification/Privilege
  Read –Week 2 readings online

Week Three 1/27-
  Topic-Rubin
  Read –Week 3 online

Week Four 2/3- Thursday Dirty Words Day
  Topic-Social Constructionism and Biological Essentialism and the power of words
  Read- Week 4 readings online

Week Five 2/10-
  Topic- Sex research in historical context
  Read- Week 5 readings online

Week Six 2/17 Test One Tuesday, February 17 bring #2 pencil and student id#
  Topic- Test Tuesday then scripting theory
  Read- Focused study guide for Tuesday than reading for Thursday

Week Seven 2/24- Thursday showing of Viva La Vulva
  Topic- Scripting Theory and GSS
  Read –Week 7 readings online

Week Eight 3/3
  Topic – DCS for ideal sex
  Read- Week 8 readings online

Week Nine 3/10
  Topic – Deconstructing the Institution of Heterosexuality
  Read –Week 9 readings online

Week Ten 3/17
  Topic-Transforming Hegemonic Heterosexuality
  Read –Week 10 readings online

  Spring Break

Week Eleven – 3/31
  Topic- TEST 2, Tuesday 3/31-bring #2 pencil and student id# then sexual health 4/2
  Read-Study guide in assignments, guides etc folder for Tuesday, then week 11 online for Thursday
TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE-SUBJECT TO CHANGES ANNOUNCED IN CLASS

Week Twelve 4/7
   Topic – Sexual Health Panics then coercion and consent
   Read – Week 12 readings online

Week Thirteen 4/14  Paper due in class Thursday 4/16
   Topic – The sociological perspective on sexual coercion and consent
   Read – Week 13 readings online

Week Fourteen 4/24
   Topic – Transforming sexual scripts/BDSM philosophy and Scripts
   Read – Week 14 readings online

Week Fifteen 4/28
   Topic – Sex Pioneer...who me?
   Read – Week 15 readings online

Final Exam TBA on My CUConnect....check your schedule online around end of February or so.