**SOCY 1006:**

**Social Construction of Sexuality**

Summer 2020 | M-F 9:15 AM – 10:50 AM | Remote

**Instructor**: Jasmine Suryawan, MA  
**Office**: Ketchum 263  
**Office Hours**: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:00 AM—12:00 PM and by appointment

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*“Let’s talk about sex…all the good things and the bad things that may be” – Salt-N-Pepa*

**Course Description and Goals**

Using a sociological lens and drawing from both gender and queer studies, this course examines the ways in which sexuality is constructed by social, cultural, and political forces. These perspectives view sexuality as a system of social control intimately connected to other axes of social identity (e.g., race, gender, age). We will contemplate how we define sex, deconstructing many taken-for-granted assumptions. By assessing different types of sex research, we will review ethical and methodological challenges of researching sexuality. We will explore the ways we learn about sex and consider the meanings of sexual bodies. We will review media representations of sexuality and examine diverse sexual practices. We will study sociological aspects of procreation, sexual disease, sex work, and sexual violence. We will also discuss the sexual basis and consequences of the current system of social stratification with an emphasis on identifying erotic injustice and oppression. Finally, we will conclude the semester by envisioning new possibilities to overcome challenges discussed throughout the semester.

**Content Advisory**

In this class, we will openly discuss controversial topics related to sex and sexuality. Some of the content of this course will include graphic material including but not limited to profanity, nude and sexual imagery, and explicit narratives of sexual behaviors, practices, and violence. While all material will be discussed sociologically and respectfully, such content may cause discomfort for some students. 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. **If you have concerns about your ability to participate in this course, please talk to me prior to July 10, the deadline to add a class.**

**Required Readings**

* Stombler, Mindy, Dawn M. Baunach, Elisabeth O. Burgess, Wendy Simonds, and Elroi J. Windsor (Eds.). 2019. Sex Matters: The Sexuality and Society Reader, 5th Edition. New York: W. W. Norton and Company. ISBN: 978-0393623581
* Additional readings will be provided for you on Canvas.

**Canvas**

We will be using Canvas for several aspects of this course. I use Canvas on a frequent basis to post announcements, documents, and important information, thus all students will be expected to check our course site to remain informed and aware of this content. I will also use Canvas to post all assignment grades and feedback. Unless otherwise indicated, you will need to turn in all class assignments via Canvas. For access, go to <https://canvas.colorado.edu/>. You should automatically be granted access to the Canvas component of the class if you are officially enrolled in the course. If you have problems with Canvas, please see: <https://oit.colorado.edu/services/teaching-learning-tools/canvas> and/or contact Information Technology Services (ITS) at (303) 735-HELP or [help@colorado.edu](mailto:help@colorado.edu).

**Please note**: All assignment files uploaded to Canvas must be in a compatible .doc or .pdf file extension. Please be aware that you will not be able to submit .pages or google docs.

**Zoom**

Class lectures and discussions will be held over Zoom during the time allotted for this course. You will have access to a secure Zoom connection via your CU Boulder identikey. Given the sensitive nature of this course, you will need a password to enter the zoom sessions. The password is: **sexmatters.** The link to the class Zoom meetings is posted on Canvas.

**Classroom Policies**

**Attendance:** Although I do not grade on attendance, your presence is vital to your success in this class. The readings have been assigned with the explicit understanding that you will be present during the lectures and discussions and the lectures and discussions are planned with the understanding that you are keeping up with the readings. I expect you to respect the use of classroom time: Be on time, be prepared, and be present for the entire class period. Students who demonstrate a lack of respect for the class (i.e. speaking out of turn on unrelated topics, making rude comments in the zoom chat feature, being otherwise disruptive or disrespectful) will be asked to leave.

**Readings:** You are expected to have your copy of the required texts available to you in class every day. Given that many of your readings are electronic files, you should be able to access them easily on your laptop or mobile device.

**Power point presentations:** I use power point presentations during my lectures. However, I will not email the slides. On Canvas I will post “scrubbed” slides, or only those slides containing important definitions or timelines. Although I do not grade on attendance, part of attending is getting the adequate material necessary to do well in this class. If you are absent, you are responsible for getting the notes from a fellow student.

**Learning Environment:** 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.

**Communication:** I realize that throughout the course of the semester, events may occur that could affect your ability to succeed in this class. I encourage you to immediately contact me if you have circumstances that will affect your academic performance. I am happy to work with students who are facing health/life emergencies, but I cannot do that if I don’t know about them. Also, I cannot make retroactive adjustments, so it is to your advantage to reach out sooner rather than later. The best way for you to reach me is through email. **Please note that I do not respond to e-mails after 6:00 p.m. or on weekends unless there is an emergency.** I will use Canvas to send emails to the class. Please regularly check the email account that is registered with the university.

**Office Hours:** In order to ensure that you will be able to meet with me during office hours, please plan on speaking to me in advance to schedule a time to meet. Similarly, if you need to meet but are unavailable during my office hours, please contact me to schedule a time to meet outside of office hours. Please use office hours as a time to ask questions you may not have been able to ask during class, address any concerns you have about your progress in the course, or to receive more specific feedback on your exams or assignments. Please note that I do not read full drafts before they are turned in (a practice deemed “pre-grading”), however, I will respond to specific questions or look at specific sections of your work. If you would like a full proofreading of an assignment, I highly recommend utilizing the campus writing center: <https://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writing-center>

**Respect**: Coming from a variety of backgrounds, many of us may differ in our perspectives on various issues discussed in this course, and thus, a commitment to mutual respect is crucial. Our success in this course is significantly affected by the quality of the classroom environment that we collectively create. A respectful classroom environment will facilitate more lively discussions and in turn result in a richer learning experience for all of us. Topics related to sexuality may evoke strong and emotional responses during discussions and debate. I fully expect that each and every person, including myself, respect the positions, views, and subjectivities of their classmates. Remember: it is okay to agree to disagree, but you must do so respectfully. In this class, we will most assuredly express strong opinions and argue over some points. Remember, 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 discussions. Please share your ideas with the intention of deepening your understanding and sharing your insights and feelings about what is important to you. You are responsible for the effect your words have on others.

**Course Requirements and Evaluation**

**Breakdown of final grade: Percentage** **Grade**

Participation Activities (15): 150 94% to 100% A

Reading Responses (15): 150 90% to 93% A-

Short Papers (3): 150 87% to 89% B+

Take-Home Final Exam: 150 84% to 86% B

Total: 600 80% to 83% B-

77% to 79% C+

74% to 76% C

70% to 73% C-

67% to 69% D+

64% to 66% D

60% to 63% D-

Below 60% F

**Participation Activities:** While I do not take an attendance grade, I do expect you to be present in class as often as possible. Throughout this semester, you will be expected to complete and turn in **16 participation activities**, which are to be completed during class. This can include such assignments as reflection papers and written group activities. At the end of the semester, **your lowest participation activity grade will be dropped** (which leaves the 15 that you see in the final grade breakdown). This means that you can miss one participation activity without penalty. That said, the dates of these assignments will not be announced beforehand and cannot be made up or turned in at a later date, just as classroom time cannot be made up.

**Reading Responses:** You will be required to turn in a total of **15 reading responses** throughout the course of this semester. You may only turn in one response per class and it must relate to the assigned readings for that day only. **Please do not turn in any additional responses as these will not be read or graded.** A prompt to help you shape your reading responses will be posted to Canvas. They should be no longer than 1 page double-spaced and include 2 discussion questions for class that day. You will be responsible for raising these questions during class discussions. Your responses will be due prior to the start of class on the day for which you have chosen to respond to the readings.

**Short Papers:** There will be a total of **3 short papers** (2-3 pages each). The issue dates and the due dates for these papers are listed both here and on the course readings and assignments schedule. Specific instructions will be made available on Canvas on the issue dates. These papers are designed to give you the chance to apply the sociological concepts you are learning to real world examples.   
  
**Short Paper 1**: Issued on July 9, Due on **July 15 by 11:59 PM**  
**Short Paper 2**: Issued on July 16, Due on **July 29 by 11:59 PM**  
**Short Paper 3**: Issued on July 23, Due on **August 5 by 11:59 PM**

**Take-Home Final Exam:** Your final exam is due on **Friday, August 7 by 11:59 PM**. The exam will be posted after the final exam review in class that day. The final exam will consist of multiple short essay prompts. The final exam is cumulative, and you are free to utilize your readings and notes in order to answer the short essay prompts.

**Grades**: Please do not email me with questions about your grades. University policy prohibits the discussion of student grades via email. This policy is intended to protect you; your grades are a private matter, and email is a public forum. Final grades will not be visible to you on Canvas as they tend to be inaccurate and do not account for late semester adjustments (curves, etc.). Given the point breakdown on the previous page, you should be able to calculate your total grade as you receive assignment grades. If you wish to discuss your grade, please make an appointment to meet with me over zoom.

**Grade Appeals:** If you would like to dispute a grade, please contact me **within three days** of receiving the grade. If you feel that you have been given an unfair grade on an exam or paper, you need to write up a two-page response as to why you would like to appeal the grade and hand it to me **no more than 3 days after you received the grade**. When appealing the grade, you need to be aware that the grade can be raised or lowered. Therefore, I only advise you to appeal grades if you feel that there is a clear miscalculation. You are responsible for being familiar with the grading rubric on written assignments and must refer to it in your appeal.

**Late or Missed Exams/Assignments:** If you know you will be unable to take your final exam on the day scheduled for any reason (religious, university event, etc.), please let me know **two weeks prior to the exam** to arrange for the exam makeup or other alternative. Please check the syllabus now to determine if there are any conflicts you need to discuss with me. If you miss the final exam without having talked to me two weeks prior, you will receive a zero on the exam. Late papers and assignments are not accepted. Exceptions to this policy may be granted for unforeseen and emergency circumstances and carry a point penalty.

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| **Class Date** | **Topics** | **Readings**  (\* indicates a canvas reading) | **Assignments** |
| Day 1: Tuesday, July 7 | Introductions and The Sociological Perspective | No readings |  |
| Day 2: Wednesday, July 8 | Categorizing Sex | 1. Are We Having Sex Now or What? p. 5  2. I Am Gay—But I Wasn’t Born This Way p. 32  3. \* The Invention of Heterosexuality |  |
| Day 3: Thursday, July 9 | Theorizing Sexuality | 1. \* Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the   Politics of Sexuality | **Paper 1 Issued** |
| Day 4: Friday, July 10 | Investigating Sexuality | 1. Alfred Kinsey and the Kinsey Report p. 68   2. Large-Scale Sex: Methods, Challenges, and  Findings of Nationally Representative Sex Research p. 75  3. Racism and Research: The Case of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study p. 87 |  |
| Day 5: Monday, July 13 | Learning Sexuality | 1. Sex-Positive Parenting, or We Don’t Touch Our Vulvas at the Table p. 190 2. LGBTQ Youth Need Inclusive Sex Education p. 223 |  |
| Day 6: Tuesday, July 14 | Sexual Bodies | 1. The G-Spot and Other Mysteries p. 257 2. “When There’s No Underbrush the Tree Looks Taller”: A Discourse Analysis of Men’s Online Groin Shaving Talk p. 295 3. Human Nature: On Fat Sexual Identity and Agency p. 319 |  |
| Day 7: Wednesday, July 15 | Sexual Bodies | 1. “Bringing Intersexy Back”? Intersexuals and  Sexual Satisfaction p. 14  2. The Perils and Pleasures of Sex for Trans People p. 25  3. \*3 Steps Toward Good Sex Beyond the Binary:  Having Sex with A Non-Binary Person, Even When That Person is You | **Paper 1 Due** |
| Day 8: Thursday, July 16 | Representing Sex | 1. What Teenagers Are Learning from Online Porn p.  128  2. Race and Masculinity in Gay Porn p. 143  3. Constructing Victims: The Erasure of  Women’s Resistance to Sexual Assault p. 159 | **Paper 2 Issued** |
| Day 9: Friday, July 17 | Sexual Practices: Hookups | 1. The Pursuit of Sexual Pleasure p. 331  2. Teen Sex in the United States p. 342  3. \* Respectable promiscuity: Digital cruising in an  era of queer liberalism |  |
| Day 10: Monday, July 20 | Sexual Practices: Race and Intimacy | 1. \* Visibility as Privilege and Danger: Heterosexual and Same-Sex Interracial Intimacy 2. \* Hung: A Meditation on the Measure of Black Men in America |  |
| Day 11: Tuesday, July 21 | Sexual Practices: Age and Disability | 1. A Sexual Culture for Disabled People 383 2. Grandma Does *WHAT*!?: Talking With Older Adults About Sex p. 379 |  |
| Day 12: Wednesday, July 22 | Sexual Practices: Heteroflexibility | 1. Bud-Sex: Constructing Normative Masculinity among Rural Straight Men p. 41 2. “Straight Girls Kissing”? Understanding Same-Gender Sexuality Beyond the Elite College Campus p. 52 3. Sexual Orientation versus Behavior—Different for Men and Women? p. 60 |  |
| Day 13: Thursday, July 23 | Sexual Practices: Kinky Sex | 1. The Privilege of Perversities: Race, Class, and Education Among Polyamorists and Kinksters   p. 402  2. Sick Sex p. 505 |  |
| Day 14: Friday, July 24 | Sexual Practices: Asexuality | 1. \*Asexual Manifesto  2. A Qualitative Exploration of the “Coming Out”  Process for Asexual Individuals p. 352 |  |
| Day 15: Monday, July 27 | Procreative Issues | 1. Birthright: A History of Planned Parenthood   p. 515   1. From Contraception to Abortion: A Moral Continuum p. 521 2. Choice or Coercion? Abortion and Black Women p. 524 |  |
| Day 16: Tuesday, July 28 | Sexual Health | 1. Venereal Disease: Sin versus Science p. 430  2. Damaged Goods: Women Managing the Stigma of  STDs p. 441  3. PrEP for HIV Prevention: Community Controversy  and Generational Sexualities p. 464 |  |
| Day 17: Wednesday, July 29 | Social Control of Sexuality | 1. No Brokeback for Black Men: Pathologizing Black  Male (Homo)sexuality p. 529  2. “How Could You Do This to Me?”: How Lesbian,  Bisexual, and Queer Latinas Negotiate Sexual Identity with Their Families p. 577 | **Paper 2 Due** |
| Day 18: Thursday, July 30 | Social Control of Sexuality | 1. “How You Bully a Girl”: Sexual Drama and the Negotiation of Gendered Sexuality in High School p. 548 2. Too Young to Consent? p. 500 | **Paper 3 Issued** |
| Day 19: Friday, July 31 | Social Control of Sexuality | 1. LGBTQ Politics in America: An Abbreviated History p. 573 2. Out in the Country p. 564 |  |
| Day 20: Monday, August 3 | Sexual Violence | 1. “I Wasn’t Raped, but…”: Revisiting Definitional Problems in Sexual Victimization p. 590 2. Rampant or Rare? The Conundrum of Quantifying Rape and Sexual Assault on College Campuses and Beyond p. 601 3. Everything You Need to Know about Consent That You Never Learned in Sex Ed p. 636 |  |
| Day 21: Tuesday, August 4 | Sexual Violence | 1. I Was Raped by a Woman p. 612 2. The Sexual Victimization of Men in America: New Data Challenge Old Assumptions p. 622 3. Sex Workers Don’t Deserve to Be Raped p. 639 |  |
| Day 22: Wednesday, August 5 | Commercial Sex | 1. What Male-for-Male Internet Escorts Say about What They Do p. 657 2. Strip Clubs and Their Regulars p. 671 3. Autonomy and Consent in Sex Work p. 685 | **Paper 3 Due** |
| Day 23: Thursday, August 6 | Possibilities | 1. Sex Matters: Future Visions for a Sex-Positive  Society p. 703 |  |
| Day 24: Friday, August 7 | Final Review | No readings | **Final Exam** |

**University Policies**

**Academic Honesty:** 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](mailto: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). For definitions and University regulations regarding academic dishonesty, familiarize yourself with—and adhere to—the University Honor Code: [www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode](http://www.colorado.edu/academics/honorcode).

I expect you to maintain academic honesty at all times and violations of the Honor Code will not be tolerated. Please note that a plagiarism detection tool will be used to review all of your written assignments for originality.

**Accommodations:** If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit a letter from Disability Services as soon as you are able so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities. Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or by e-mail at [dsinfo@colorado.edu](mailto:dsinfo@colorado.edu). If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see Temporary Injuries guidelines under the Quick Links at the Disability Services website. If you are involved in university-sponsored activities that will result in you missing class time, it is your responsibility to contact me by the second week of this summer session. Additionally, if you recognize any conflict with assignment due dates and/or class attendance that will occur as the result of religious observances, please notify me no later than one week before your missed class. If your religious observance will conflict with testing dates, you must contact me as soon as possible so alternate dates can be selected. More information on CU’s policies is available at: <http://www.colorado.edu/policies/fac_relig.html>

**Discrimination and Harassment**: The University of Colorado Boulder is committed to maintaining a positive learning, working, and living environment. 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, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. Individuals who believe they have been discriminated against should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or the Office of Student Conduct and Conflict Resolution (OSC) at 303-492-5550. Information about the OIEC, the above referenced policies, and the campus resources available to assist individuals regarding discrimination or harassment can be found at the OIEC website. The full policy on discrimination and harassment contains additional information.

**Mandatory Reporting:** As an instructor, I am in a supervising position and am therefore a mandatory reporter. Should I become aware of a complaint of protected class discrimination and harassment and sexual harassment (including sexual assault, intimate partner abuse, and stalking) or related retaliation, CU Boulder policy requires me to promptly report it to the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) if the alleged perpetrator is an employee or a student. OIEC will provide assistance as needed (and whether or not there is a formal report or participation in an investigation) in accessing on and off campus services. OIEC is committed to maintaining the complainant’s privacy and confidentiality.

**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 8 conflicts with scheduled exams, assignments or required attendance. I have done my best not to schedule important class activities on major religious holidays. However, if you do have a religious observance conflict, you will need to provide written proof of the conflict and I will work with you on an individual basis to address the issue. See the campus policy regarding religious observances for full details.

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***I reserve the right to modify the above syllabus and schedule during the semester, and it is each student’s responsibility to be aware of any announcements in class, and/or posted on Canvas regarding changes.***

***Syllabus constructed with many thanks to Dr. Elroi J. Windsor and Dr. Matthew Brown.***