

SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SEXUALITY SOCY/WMST 1006 FALL 2018

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You are responsible for everything in the registration handbook, this 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 enrolled in a University of Colorado Boulder course are responsible for knowing and adhering to the Honor Code. Violations of the policy may include: plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, lying, bribery, threat, unauthorized access to academic materials, clicker fraud, submitting the same or similar work in more than one course without permission from all course instructors involved, and aiding academic dishonesty. All incidents of academic misconduct will be reported to the Honor Code (honor@colorado.edu); 303-492-5550). Students who are found responsible for violating the academic integrity policy will be subject to nonacademic sanctions from the Honor Code as well as academic sanctions from the faculty member. Additional information regarding the Honor Code academic integrity policy can be found at the [Honor Code Office website](#).

Honor code violations will result in a 0 for the assignment at a minimum.

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 race, color, national

origin, sex, pregnancy, age, disability, creed, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, veteran status, political affiliation or political philosophy. 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. For more information, see the policies on [classroom behavior](#) and the [Student Code of Conduct](#).

University Creed

As a member of the Boulder community and the University of Colorado Boulder, I agree to:

- Act with honor, integrity and accountability in my interactions with students, faculty, staff and neighbors.
- Respect the rights of others and accept our differences.
- Contribute to the greater good of this community.

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

Sexual Misconduct, Discrimination, Harassment and/or Related Retaliation

The University of Colorado Boulder (CU Boulder) is committed to fostering a positive and welcoming learning, working, and living environment. CU Boulder will not tolerate acts of sexual misconduct (including sexual assault, exploitation, harassment, dating or domestic violence, and stalking), discrimination, and harassment by members of our community. Individuals who believe they have been subject to misconduct or retaliatory actions for reporting a concern should contact the Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance (OIEC) at 303-492-2127 or cureport@colorado.edu. Information about the OIEC, university policies, [anonymous reporting](#), and the campus resources can be found on the [OIEC website](#).

Please know that faculty and instructors have a responsibility to inform OIEC when made aware of incidents of sexual misconduct, discrimination, harassment and/or related retaliation, to ensure that individuals impacted receive information about options for reporting and support resources.

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. In this class, I will offer an alternative option/due date so that students can observe.

See the [campus policy regarding religious observances](#) for full details.

Accommodation for Disabilities

If you qualify for accommodations because of a disability, please submit your accommodation letter from Disability Services to your faculty member in a timely manner so that your needs can be addressed. Disability Services determines accommodations based on documented disabilities in the academic environment. Information on requesting accommodations is located on the [Disability Services website](#). Contact Disability Services at 303-492-8671 or dsinfo@colorado.edu for further assistance. If you have a temporary medical condition or injury, see [Temporary Medical Conditions](#) under the Students tab on the Disability Services website.

COURSE TEXTS

Unlimited ISBN: \$119.99 9780357700006 (IAC)

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

Optional:

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

This text is a great reference for information about the body, health, communication, and sexual information. I highly recommend this book!

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 Canvas 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.

EVALUATION COMPONENTS

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.

Papers: Two two-page papers will be assigned during the semester. Each paper is worth 10 points. I will deduct 10% /per day from any late paper. You have one week to turn in a late paper after that I will not accept it.

Reading Summaries: There will be 10 reading summaries. Each group will lead two class discussions. Groups will prepare a summary of their discussion. Each discussion summary is worth 2 points.

Sexual Utopia Project: This small-group presentation will require you to analyze contemporary cultural representations of sex, gender, and sexuality. This will be worth 10 points.

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

TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE

The following provides the class topics, readings and assignments that are due before class. This schedule is tentative, and any modifications will be announced in class.

Mo 8/27	Topic – Introduction & Course Expectations Read – “Exploring Human Sexuality”
We 8/29	Topic – Social Control and Privilege Read – “White Privilege, Male Privilege”
Mo 9/3	NO CLASS: LABOR DAY
We 9/5	Topic – What is sexuality? Why study sexuality? Sexuality Pioneers Read – “Are We Having Sex Now or What?” and “Understanding Human Sexuality”
Mo 9/10	Topic – What is sexuality? Why study sexuality? Sexuality Pioneers Due: Course Agreement Form
We 9/12	Topic – Assumptions of Essentialism Read – “In the Beginning: Nature”
Mo 9/17	Topic – Assumptions of Constructionism Read – “Is There a History of Sexuality?”
We 9/19	Topic – Radical Theory of Sexuality Read – “Thinking Sex”
Mo 9/24	Topic – Radical Theory of Sexuality
We 9/26	Topic – Radical Theory of Sexuality Due: Paper One
Mo 10/1	Topic – History of Sexual Distinctions Read – “Homosexual and Heterosexual”
We 10/3	EXAM ONE
Mo 10/8	Topic – Panic Discourse and Moral Contagion Model Read – “Heterocopulative Syndrome” and “Sexually Transmitted Diseases”
We 10/10	Topic – Panic Discourse and Moral Contagion Model Read – “Heterocopulative Syndrome” and “Sexually Transmitted Diseases”
Mo 10/15	Topic – Hegemonic Masculine Sexuality Read – “Rock Hudson’s Body”
We 10/17	Topic – Hegemonic Feminine Sexuality Read – “The Egg and the Sperm”
Mo 10/22	Topic – Hegemonic Sexual Script & Heteronormativity Read – “Atypical Sexual Behavior”
We 10/24	Topic – Hegemonic Sexual Script & Heteronormativity Read – “Atypical Sexual Behavior” Due: Paper Two

Mo 10/29	Topic – Disruptions I: Transgressive Bodies Read – “All Together Now” and “Our Cunts Are Not the Same” View: <i>Viva La Vulva and Private Dicks</i>*
We 10/31	Topic – Disruptions I: Transgressive Bodies Read – “All Together Now” and “Our Cunts Are Not the Same” View: <i>Viva La Vulva and Private Dicks</i>*
Mo 11/5	EXAM TWO
We 11/7	Topic – Disruptions II: Imperialism, Science, and the Sexual “Other” View – <i>The Life and Times of Sara Baartman</i>
Mo 11/12	Topic – Disruptions III: Science and the Sexual “Other” Read – “Racism and Research”
We 11/14	Topic – Disruptions III: Sexual Coercion and Rape Culture Read – “Tactics of Sexual Coercion”
Mo 11/26	Topic – Rape Panic Consequences Read – “Sexual Coercion” and “It’s Only a Penis”
We 11/28	Topic - Sexual Coercion and Rape Culture
Mo 12/3	Disruptions IV: Transgressive Desires Guest Speaker –The BDSM Scene (Evening)** Read – “Over a Knee Willingly” & “In Praise of Strap-Ons”
We 12/5	Topic – Disruption V: Feminism & BDSM
Mo 12/10	Topic – Disruption VI: Sexual Utopia Read – “My Mother Liked to Fuck” and “Sluts in Utopia” Due: Sexual Utopia project
We 12/12	Sexual Utopia project

Our final is Saturday, December 15 at 4:30 - 7 p.m.

*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 or one of us for notes.

**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. 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 or me for notes.

CAMPUS RESOURCES

Cultural Unity and Engagement Center

(Formerly Women's Resource Center/ Gender and Sexuality Resource Center)

Location: C4C, Suite N320

Phone: 303-492-5667

Website: <https://www.colorado.edu/cue>

Office of Institutional Equity and Compliance

Location: 3100 Marine Street (2nd floor)

Phone: (303) 492-2127

Website: <https://www.colorado.edu/institutionalequity>

Office of Victim Assistance (confidential)

Location: C4C, Suite N352

Phone: (303) 492-8855

Website: www.colorado.edu/studentaffairs/victimassistance

Ombuds Office (confidential & informal)

Location: C4C, Suite N440

Phone: (303) 492-5077

Website: <https://www.colorado.edu/ombuds>

Writing Center

Location: Norlin E111

Phone: (303) 735-6906

Website: <https://www.colorado.edu/pwr/writing-center>