SOC 225: Sexuality, Culture, and Power

10:20-11:20 MWF

Asbury Hall 121

Fall 2013

**Instructor:** Alicia Suarez

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**Office hours:** 1:45-3:15 M W (or by appointment)

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### COURSE DESCRIPTION

# What does sociology have to do with sexuality? Sexuality is generally conceived of as an intensely personal and private issue. Sexuality is seen as simply being a part of “human nature.” In this course, we will question these taken-for-granted assumptions concerning sexuality. We will investigate the social complexity of sexuality as the meanings and embodiments of sex are constantly under negotiation both publicly and privately. In order to achieve this goal, we will look at cultural and historical understandings of sexuality, in addition to assessing current beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors in the United States. We will see how our sexuality is affected by larger social structures and power differentials such as our gender, race/ethnicity, social class, age, religion, ability and location. The course begins by addressing methodological issues with studying sexuality in the social sciences. Next, we look at various agents of sexual socialization. We then explore how people embrace various sexual practices and identities. The effects of technology are examined along with the impact of diseases. Finally, we discuss various kinds of commercial sex with special attention to the feminist debates regarding sex work.

**COURSE GOALS**

1. To appreciate the sociological study of sexuality and the associated methodological quandaries.
2. To explore the diverse array of sexual identities, practices, and lifestyles existing in our society as well as other societies both contemporarily and historically.
3. To understand how the sexual self is socialized through various agents of socialization.
4. To recognize how larger cultural conflicts (especially race, class, and gender) affect the embodiment of sexuality.
5. To explore the impact of technology and disease on sexual practices, definitions, and identities.
6. To appreciate the diversity of experiences in commercial sex and to move beyond dichotomous theorizing about sex work.

### REQUIRED TEXTS

Barton, Bernadette. 2006. *Stripped.* New York: New York University Press.

Carpenter, Laura M. 2005. *Virginity Lost.* New York: New York University Press.

Loe, Meika. 2004. *The Rise of Viagra.* New York: New York University Press.

Schalet, Amy T. 2011. *Not Under My Roof:Parents, Teens, and the Culture of Sex.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Stombler, Mindy, Dawn Baunach, Elisabeth O. Burgess, Denise Donnelly, and Wendy

Simonds, Eds. 2013. *Sex Matters: The Sexuality and Society Reader.* 4th ed. New York: W.W.Norton.

<http://wwnorton.com/ebooklite/sexmatters4e/welcome.asp>

The required articles are available on eReserve on Moodle.

### EVALUATION

**Exams:** There will be two exams (100 points each) in this course. The exams will be short-answer and essay based. We will discuss this further in class.

**Active participation:** I expect you to attend class prepared and ready to *engage* with the material and the class community. Simply showing up to class having skimmed the readings is insufficient. If everyone does this, we will have a boring class (and you will have to listen to me the whole time). If only a few people are prepared, we will only know their opinions and miss out on the full classroom experience of everyone participating. Being an engaged student involves not only classroom participation, but can include coming to office hours, bringing in articles/news stories, or sharing information from the media/popular culture pertaining to the topic of medical sociology. You can earn up to 50 points of your grade from your *active participation*. So, how do I actively participate you may ask?

1) Really, truly listen to others.

2) Ask others to clarify their statements if you don’t understand or need more elaboration.

3) Try to answer questions that are raised in class.

4) Ask questions about readings, lecture, etc.

5) Support your statements with *evidence* (from lecture and/or readings).

6) Summarize various statements made in class; show the linkages or disparate concepts discussed.

7) *Constructively* criticize your colleagues.

8) Contribute to our model site.

I do not expect you to be able to practice these skills perfectly. Instead, they will be a goal to strive for. Some of us are shyer than others, but these are acquired skills that can benefit everyone.

**Leading discussion:** In small groups of 2 or 3, you will lead discussion one day during the semester (20 points). You should have questions prepared to get the class discussing the book chapter due that day (you are not responsible for covering the article(s) from the Stombler reader or e-reserve articles). You should NOT outline the main points or summarize the readings---everyone is capable of doing that outside of class. Instead, your job is to stimulate connections with other course materials, issues, criticisms or questions that remain concerning the reading. You may bring in outside material (newspaper articles, film/TV clips, current events, etc.) that will facilitate these goals. This should last **15- 20 minutes**. You earn points through demonstrating **thoughtful planning of your discussion, clear comprehension of the chapter(s), and sophisticated connections to other course materials.**

**Reaction papers:** There are 4 short papers for this course. Please see handout.

**Grading:**

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| **Exam 1** | **100 points** |
| **Exam 2** | **100 points** |
| **Reaction papers** | **100 points** |
| **Participation** | **70 points** |
| **Total** | **370 points** |

I will follow the usual DePauw University grading system whereby:

A or A- reflects, “achievement of exceptionally high merit.”

B+, B, B- reflects, “achievement at a level superior to the basic level.”

C+, C, C- reflects, “basic achievement.”

D+, D, D- reflects, “achievement which falls short of satisfying the quantitative and qualitative requirements yet warrants credit.”

Remember, you do not start the course with an A and lose points. You essentially start with zero points and *earn* your grades along the way. Please meet with me if at any time you have questions about your grades. **Do not wait until the end of the semester**.

\*\*\* An important point to note about grades. Grades do NOT reflect your effort, but the result of your efforts. We are not all alike and some of us must put forth more effort while others put forth minimal effort and earn higher marks. We are simply diverse people with different talents and abilities. Therefore, I do NOT grade your effort. In addition, grades do NOT reflect what I think you do or do not deserve. Your grade is what YOU earn in the course.

### OTHER POLICIES

**Classroom Etiquette:** Discussing sex can be uncomfortable. Hopefully, this course will enable you to talk about sexuality in a mature, open manner. You are not required in any way to reveal your own identity and/or sexual experiences (though you may if relevant). I do expect you to bring up your own beliefs and attitudes about sexuality. Undoubtedly, there will be a broad array of viewpoints in the class. At times, you may feel disgusted or embarrassed by a topic and/or surprised that others do not share your feelings. While these feelings may evoke a strong emotional reaction, I expect everyone to still maintain civility. I want everyone to feel safe in the classroom and will do my best to insure that our class is a secure learning environment. I will privately let you know if you are behaving inappropriately. Please let me know if you are uncomfortable. In this course, there will be frank discussions of sexually explicit material, including language some may find offensive and materials depicting sexual acts and nudity. If you do not want to expose yourself to this material, you should **NOT** take this course. Finally, this course is about exploring how sexuality is socially constructed and affected by power dynamics in society. This course is **NOT** about imposing one’s own morality or practices on others.

### In addition, we must be watchful to not take up too much “airtime” and allow for *everyone* to share. Talking *a lot* is generally *not* a good way of actively participating. Instead, carefully listening to others and clearly and concisely expressing your input is the best strategy. Remember to address each other when talking rather than directing your comments to me (unless they are solely intended for me!) Of course, all cell phones must be turned off. Texting is NOT appropriate behavior in class. Chronic tardiness and/or habitual sleeping, disruptiveness, etc. will lead to embarrassing public shaming (not to mention the effects on your grade). Finally, about laptops, I discourage use of laptops in class and recommend taking notes by hand. A laptop is often a distraction and hinders active participation.

### Absences: It is *your responsibility* to find out what happened in class, not mine. Asking me, “What did I miss?” or “What did we do in class on …?” are not appropriate inquiries. I am, however, more than happy to go over notes *after* you have gotten them from another student. Remember, in order to *actively participate,* you have to be present.

**Late work/Make-up Work:** All reaction papers are due in class and all exams will be taken in class on the schedule day, unless, I receive *in advance*, an official notification that you will be off-campus on official university business or some other *legitimate and verifiable* excused absence. There will be NO EXTRA CREDIT assignments available to anyone.

**Academic Dishonesty/Misconduct:** I take academic dishonesty or misconduct extremely seriously as surely you do as well. Please be familiar with the DePauw University Academic Integrity Policy available in the *Student Handbook.* Any student violating this policy will be subject to a range of disciplinary actions.

**Students with Disabilities:** DePauw University offers accommodations to students with disabilities. It is your responsibility to contact the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) coordinator: Pamela Roberts, pamelaroberts@depauw.edu to request accommodations.

**Communication:** Please come and visit me during office hours. I am there waiting for you to discuss readings, lecture, grading, exams, classroom behaviors, sociology, etc. If you cannot come to scheduled office hours, please let me know and we will work something else out. The best way to reach me is through e-mail. I will communicate with the class through email. I expect each of you to check e-mail on a *daily* basis.

### SCHEDULE

Readings must be completed *prior* to class on the due date. We may get off schedule and I will make adjustments accordingly in the event that this occurs.

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| 8/28 (W) | Introduction to class |
| **Categorizing Sex and Investigating Sexuality** | |
| 8/30 (F) | 1.Are we having sex now or what?  3. The Perils and Pleasures of Sex for Trans People  (box) Diversity in Conceptualizing Having “Had Sex” |
| 9/2 (M) | 4. Straight Dude Seeks Same  14. Gay-for-Pay: Straight Men and the Making of Gay Pornography  6. Straight Girls Kissing |
| 9/4 (W) | 7. Alfred Kinsey and the Kinsey Report  8. Large Scale Sex: Methods, Challenges, and Findings of Nationally Representative Sex Research  (box) Doing it Differently: Women’s and Men’s Estimates of Their Number of Lifetime Sexual Partners |
| 9/6 (F) | 11. Sexing up the Subject: Methodological Nuance in Researching the Female Sex Industry  (box) Challenges of Funding Sex Research  Loe Appendix.  Carpenter Methodological appendix  Schalet Methodological appendix |
| 9/9 (M) | 9. Racism and Research  box (Doing More Good than Harm?) |
| 9/11 (W) | 10. “Sexuality and Social Theorizing” |
| 9/13 (F) | **Present group research proposals** |
| 9/16 (M) | **Film:** *Kinsey* |
| 9/18 (W) | **Film:** *Kinsey* |
| 9/20 (F) | **Film:** *Kinsey* |
| **Sexual Socialization** | |
| 9/23 (M) | 18. The Death of the Stork: Sex Education Books for Children  (box) What Do I Say to My Children?  Carpenter Intro |
| 9/25 (W) | **Content analysis of Children’s Books**  Carpenter Ch. 1  **Group 1 leads discussion** |
| 9/27 (F) | 19. Sexuality Education and Desire: Still Missing After All These Years  (box) The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Youth In American Schools  Carpenter Ch. 2-3 |
| 9/30 (M) | 25. The Sorcerer’s Apprentice: Why Can’t We Stop Circumcising Boys?  (box) Hung  Carpenter Ch. 4  **Film: Slicing through the Myth** |
| 10/2 (W) | 24. “The G-Spot and Other Mysteries”  Carpenter Ch. 5  **Film: Breasts** |
| 10/4 (F) | 21. Fighting Teenage Pregnancy With MTV Stars as Exhibit A  (box) Too Young to Consent?  (box) How American Teens view Sex  Carpenter: Ch 6  **Group 2 leads discussion** |
| 10/7 (M) | Carpenter Ch. 7 and Review |
| 10/9 (W) | **Exam 1** |
| **Embracing Sexuality (or Not) Contextualized** | |
| 10/11 (F) | 31. The Pursuit of Sexual Pleasure  32. Getting, Giving, Faking, Having: Orgasm and the Performance of Pleasure  Schalet Ch 1 |
| 10/14 (M) | 5. Gay By Choice?  box (Queer by Choice, not by Chance: Against Being “Born This Way”)  box (Bisexuality and Bi Identity)  box (LGBTQ Politics in America)  Schalet Ch. 2  **Group 3 leads discussion** |
| 10/16 (W) | 49. Hooking Up: Sex in Guyland  36. “Reclaiming Rauch”? Spatializing Queer Identities at Toronto Women’s Bathhouse Events  13. Geishas of a Different Kind: Gay Asian Men and the Gendering of Sexual Identity  (box) Bullies Use Sexual Taunts to Hurt Teen Girls  Schalet Ch. 3 |
| 10/18 (F) | 51. “How Could You Do This to Me?”  50. Out in the Country  Schalet Ch. 4  **Group 4 leads discussion** |
| 10/28 (M) | 12. Representin’ in Cyberspace  22. Sexual Risk and the Double Standard for African American Adolescent Women  Schalet Ch. 5 |
| 10/30 (W) | 23. Put Me In, Coach!  38. Becoming a Practitioner: The Biopolitics of BDSM  Schalet Ch. 6-7 |
| 11/1 (F) | 34. The Privilege of Perversions: Race, Class, and Education among Polyamorists and Kinksters  45. Sick Sex  Schalet Ch. 8 and conclusion  **Group 5 leads discussion** |
| **Disease and “Broken” Bodies** | |
| 11/4 (M) | 26. The Politics of Acculturation: Female Genital Cutting  28. In Search of (Better) Sexual Pleasure: Female Genital “Cosmetic” Surgery  Loe preface and Ch. 1 |
| 11/6 (W) | 33. A Sexual Culture for Disabled People  (box) What’s a Leg Got to Do with It?  15. Out of Line: The Sexy Femmegimp Politics of Flaunting It!  30. Boundary Breaches: The Body, Sex, and Sexuality after Stoma Surgery |
| 11/8 (F) | 2. Bringing Intersexy Back?  35. There’s More to Life than Sex? Differences and Commonalities within the Asexual Community  (box) Grandma does WHAT?!  Loe Ch. 2  **Group 6 leads discussion** |
| 11/11 (M) | 42. Showdown in Choctaw County  47. Deconstructing “Down Low” Discourse  (box) The Unexplored Story of HIV and Aging  Loe Ch. 3 |
| 11/13 (W) | 43. Condom Use and Meaning in Rural Malawi  box (Prophylactic Circumcision: Applying Recent Research Results to the United States)  **Guest Speaker: Professor Rebecca Upton** |
| 11/15 (F) | 40. Venereal Disease  41. Damaged Goods  Loe Ch. 4  **Group 7 leads discussion** |
| 11/18 (M) | Loe Ch. 5-epilogue |
| **Commercial Sex** | |
| 11/20 (W) | Barton Intro  Chancer, Lynn S. *“From Pornography to Sadomasochism: Reconciling Feminist Differences”*  (box) What We Know About Pornography  16. The Porning of America |
| 11/22 (F) | 58. Sex work for the Middle Classes  (box) Strip clubs and their Regulars  Barton Ch. 1-2 |
| 11/25 (M) | 59. Overcome: The Money Shot in Pornography and Prostitution  Barton Ch. 3  **Group 8 leads discussion** |
| 12/2 (M) | Marlowe, Julian.*“It’s Different for Boys”*  Pruitt and LaFonte. “*For Love and Money*”  Barton Ch. 4 |
| 12/4 (W) | 61. Marketing Sex  (box) Legalized Prostitution  Barton Ch. 5  **Group 9 leads discussion** |
| 12/6 (F) | 60. Not for Sale  Doezema, Jo. *“Forced to Choose”*  Barton Ch. 6 |
| 12/9 (M) | Barton Ch. 7  **Film: Our Bodies, Our Minds** |
| 12/11 (W) | **Film cont’d** |
| 12/13 (F) | Wrap up |
| 12/17 (T) | **9:30-11:30** |