

Portland State University
WS 370U History of Sexualities
Winter 2010

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To Schedule an Appointment call: 725-3516

Course Description:

This course examines the constructed nature of sexual desire and sexual practices in the North American context. Sex is obviously about reproduction, but it is also a site for the production of pleasure, social regulation, political repression, social institutions, and social/political agency. We begin with the meeting of cultures during the period of European conquest and end with a look at HIV/AIDS and the transgender identity movement. This course will include an exploration of gender, sexual orientation, and comparative sexualities across race/ethnicity, class and gender in history. It is open to students of all sexual and gender identities.

Certain assumptions frame this course. Among them are these two: first, sexual practices are socially produced, not simply an expression of biological impulses; second, history is an unstable narrative mediated by context and perspective, not a set of facts to “uncover” and memorize, thus, making historical inquiry an opportunity for critical thinking.

Reading Materials:

Required textbook: Kathy Peiss, ed. *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*

(Houghton Mifflin, 2002) –available for purchase at the PSU Women’s Resource Center

(Montgomery Hall) during the first week of classes and thereafter at In Other Words Bookstore

Articles posted on BlackBoard (denoted with **BB** on the schedule of readings)

Articles available electronically through Millar Library website (denoted with **ML** on the schedule of readings)

Optional Survey Text: John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman, *Intimate Matters* (1988 or 1997)

Honor Code: You are expected to uphold Portland State University's student conduct code. This code prohibits “academic dishonesty” defined as “knowingly or intentionally seeking to claim credit for the work or effort of another person or participation in such acts. This includes, but is not limited to: (a) cheating, (b) fraud, (c) plagiarism, such as word for word copying, using borrowed words or phrases from original text into new patterns without attribution, or paraphrasing another writer’s ideas; (d) The buying or selling of all or any portion of course assignments and research papers; (e) Performing academic assignments (including tests and examinations) for other persons; (f) Unauthorized disclosure or receipt of academic information; (g) Falsification of research data; and (h) Unauthorized collaboration.” Any assignments found to be in violation of the code will receive a failing grade, and all participants will be subject to disciplinary action. Any questions about this policy may be directed to the Office of Student Affairs, Smith Memorial Student Union.

Accessibility: Students with disabilities who may need disability-related classroom accommodations for this course are encouraged to contact Disability Services (ext. 5-4150), and to consult with the professor.

Course Changes: Please keep in mind that this syllabus is subject to change (with reasonable notice). Readings, topics, and assignments may be added or removed depending on the needs and interests of the class as a whole. If you miss class, it is always your responsibility to find out what you missed, including changes in assignments or readings.

Assignments: Select any combination of assignments from the list below which equal a potential 100 points. Plan on completing assignments worth a potential 40 pts by the end of week four, January 28. The rest of your assignments can be completed anytime before the end of the last regular class meeting, Thursday,

March 11. (We will meet during our scheduled final exam period, but I will not accept any further assignments during finals week, unless you have arranged this with me in advance.) During the final exam period, you will list the assignments that you completed, give yourself points for each one, and a final grade for the course.

1) Written Learning Plan (10 pts): Create a written learning plan during the first two weeks of the term which expresses your goals for the course and states how you anticipate putting your plan into action during the term. Your goals might be related to developing academic skills such as learning to read against the grain instead of assuming that everything you read is “true” and “correct” or working on a new system of taking notes as you read or becoming more familiar with library resources. You might consider tackling larger questions like why history is a relevant area of study or to what extent you believe in the social construction of sexuality. Perhaps more personal goals will be your focus like developing supportive friendships with other students or learning to juggle work, family and school in better ways than you might have done in the past.

2) Reflection Journal (20 pts for each set of five full pages): Keep a journal which records your responses to the content of the course materials. Avoid stringing together a series of short responses to individual articles. Work on themes which draw on three or four assigned readings articles for each set of five pages.

3) Group Project (20 pts -- negotiable): If you learn best by working with others, recruit others to join you. Submit a written proposal of your project to me for feedback and discussion before your group gets too far into the project.

4) Attendance (20pts, 1 pt for each full class attended)

5) Exploring Historical Resources (40 pts for each topic): This assignment leads you on a treasure hunt of the various sources relevant to historical research by directing you to find certain types of resource materials both secondary and primary. Select an historical topic from before 1960 and then find the following types of resources that will help you explore your topic. (You may not use the same article or source to fulfill more than one of the following types of required resources.)

1. one article from *The Journal of the History of Sexuality*
2. one article from *The Journal of American History*
3. one article listed in *America: History and Life*, an electronic database at the Millar Library website
4. a primary source document that represents personal experience (e.g. diary entry, personal letter, court testimony)
5. a primary source document which represents an aspect of public life (e.g. court transcript, newspaper article, novel)
6. a census document
7. evidence of material culture (e.g. drawings of clothing, newspaper advertisement for a pessary, floor plan for a home, recipe for an abortion remedy)

Once you read all of the source materials, you will create a portfolio on your topic with eight entries, one for each of the seven resources listed above, and one final reflection on your research journey. This reflection might include what you’ve learned about researching this particular topic, how historical research is different from research you’ve done for other courses, what you learned about finding primary source documents, whether your topic is a viable one for a research paper, etc. Your entry for each of the seven sources should include the following:

- a. full bibliographic details of the source
- b. a description of each source (what it is)
- c. an evaluation of it’s significance for your topic

Don’t forget to include your personal reflection on your research journey describe above.

6) Class Presentation of Your Research Work in #1 (10 pts): You may present your research findings to the class in a 10 minute presentation. Strive to interest other students either in the topic or in the research process itself.

7) Class Facilitation (10 pts for one to two articles depending upon difficulty; 20 pts for 2 or more in combination): Facilitate class discussion on a specific reading or a set of readings assigned for the course. Your classmates should be active participants. Please arrange this at least a week in advance of the class meeting by handing me a written request for the articles and date. Specific classes or readings will be assigned on a first come first serve basis.

8) Unpacking Primary Source Documents with the class (10 pts for one to two documents depending upon difficulty; 20 pts for 2 or more in combination): This option allows you design an exercise that engages the class in analyzing the meaning of one or more primary source documents. Your classmates should be active participants. Please arrange this at least a week in advance of the class meeting by handing me a written request for the documents and date. Specific documents will be assigned on a first come first serve basis.

9) Conversation with Ann (10 pts): Attend 30 minute advising appointment with Ann to talk about anything that's on your mind, including planning for degree requirements, career goals, Women's Studies major, reading strategies, how the class is going for you, etc. Good advising and relationships with faculty are two of the most important factors in predicting whether a student will complete their undergraduate degree. Use this as an opportunity to demystify the idea of talking with your professors.

10) Written Self-Evaluation (10 pts): At the end of the term, write a detailed evaluation of your performance in the course. This should be at least two to three full pages typed and read more like a cohesive essay than a list of achievements.

If you submitted a learning plan at the beginning of the course, use this as a template for evaluating your progress toward your learning goals. How well did you fulfill your learning plan? What things demonstrate your progress? Did your goals change during the course of the term? How and why? How did you select your course assignments? How well did they serve your learning plan? Where might you go with your learning goal next term?

If you did not submit a learning plan, consider some of the following things. Did you develop goals during the course of the term? What were they and what progress did you make toward your learning goals? What aspects of the course were engaging to you and why? Did you read the course materials deeply and fully? Why or why not? How did you select the assignments and how successful were you in fulfilling those you selected?

11) Self-Designed Project (40 pts): Design and carry out and present to the class a project which represents the central meaning of the class to you. This might be an art project, or a web page, a blog, or a traditional research paper, an action project or a performance piece which encapsulates the significance of what you have learned or the specific learnings that you take from the course.

Schedule of Assignments:

T Jan 5: Introduction

Sexuality and Empire Building

Th Jan 7: thoroughly read syllabus, and Peiss, 26-68 (**BB**)

Reading Between the Lines

T Jan 12: Peiss, 1-25

Regulating Sexuality in the Colonies

Th Jan 13: Peiss, 70-78; 92-105; **ML**: Dayton, Cornelia Hughes. "Taking the Trade." *William and Mary Quarterly*. 48:1 (Jan 1991): 19-41.
T Jan 19: Peiss, 78-92; **BB**: Finkelman, "Crimes of Love"

Conflicts in the Nineteenth Century: Gender, Race, and Class

Th Jan 21: Peiss, 107-141
T Jan 26: Peiss, 142-186; **BB**: Bederman, "Civilization"
Video: Ida B. Wells
Th Jan 28: Peiss, 187-237

Sex and the Public Discourse: The Making of Heteronormativity

T Feb 2: Peiss, 238-271
Th Feb 4: Peiss, 273-307

T Feb 9: Peiss, 308-336
Th Feb 11: **BB**: Gamson, "Rubber Wars"
Video: Margaret Sanger

T Feb 16: Peiss, 348-365; **BB**: Somerville, "Scientific Racism"
Th Feb 18: Peiss, 338-347
Film Clips

Repression and Revolutions

T Feb 23: Peiss, 367-403
Th Feb 25: **BB**: Solinger, "The Population Bomb"

T Mar 2: Peiss, 405-443
Th Mar 4: Peiss, 445-451 and 460-471

T Mar 9: Peiss, 451-460 and 471-483
Th Mar 11: Peiss, 484-506

T Mar 16 Final Exam Period—Debriefing