

Department: SOCI / WS

Course No.: 3621/W [245/W]

Credits: 3

Title: Sociology of Sexualities

Contact: Marita McComiskey

Content Area: CA4 Diversity and Multiculturalism

Diversity: CA4 Non-International

Catalog Copy: 245W. Sociology of Sexualities. Prerequisite: Engl 110 or 111 or 250. Open to sophomores or higher.

Course Information:

1a) This course explores the social organization, construction, and politics of sexualities with a particular focus on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (lgbtq) experiences and the intersection of sexualities, gender, race, and class. We will define key theoretical concepts and examine the ways that race and gender influence expectations, understandings and expressions of sexuality. We will also examine the politics of sex work and the ways in which sexuality is regulated formally through the law.

1b) This course has three main requirements. A paper that counts for 60% of the course, and an essay-based midterm and final (each 20% of course grade). Weekly reading assignments vary in length from approximately 75 to 150 pages per week depending on the difficulty of the reading.

1c) Key concepts; theories based on essentialism, social constructionism , history of sexuality and sexuality research; the impact of culture and power on how individuals become sexual; sexuality as an aspect of racialized domination; the gendered and racialized nature of desire; heterosexuality as an institution; bisexuality; sexual violence; the family and heteronormativity ; sexuality and the body; the medicalization of sexuality; sex work (includes the international trade in sex trafficking); the law and the regulation of sexual norms; the politics of sexuality.

Meets Goals of Gen Ed.:

1) Become articulate: Through the weekly writings on WebCt , the paper, and essay questions on exams, students will learn to clearly articulate their thoughts.

2) Acquire critical judgment: Students will learn to understand what it means for social theory to account for sexuality. They will be exposed to essentialist and social constructionist theories about sexuality as well as to Foucauldian understandings about regulation and domination. They will learn to critically evaluate these social theories and to consider how these theories would explain a variety of social phenomena.

3) Acquire moral sensitivity: This course will examine how societies shift their constructions of tolerance over time and will illustrate how such tolerance is often linked to broader social, economic, and political change. Students will learn to understand how sexuality is used as an aspect of domination (for example, the rape of black women during slavery and continued negative images of black female sexuality). Students will discuss sensitive and contentious issues, such as the current debates over same-sex marriage.

4) Acquire awareness of their era and society: Students will learn that the social forces which currently organize sexuality and experiences of sexuality are historically variable and that many of the formations that they take for granted (such as the privatized nuclear family) are recent constructs, rather than enduring social realities. Students will learn that other societies and our own society during other eras organize family forms and sexuality in diverse ways.

5) Acquire consciousness of the diversity of human culture and experience: Through historical and cross-national discussion about how the same sexual behavior can be condemned in one culture and celebrated in another, students will learn that human culture and experience differ across time and place. They will learn not to assume that 21st century Western standards and definitions of behavior necessarily apply in other places.

CA4 Criteria:

1. Emphasize that there are varieties of human experiences, perceptions, thoughts, values, and/or modes of creativity; By paying close attention to the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people, students will learn that there are varieties of human experiences. In addition to examining the experiences of people with these sexual and gender identities, we will also examine how and why tolerance shifts over time. For example, homophobia is often linked to a belief in strict gender roles for men and women.

2. Emphasize that interpretive systems and/or social structures are cultural creations; By examining how sexual identities are historically variable B for example, the same sexual behavior becomes a basis for identity in some places and times and not others B students will learn to connect identity with social structure and cultural interpretations.

3. Consider the similarities that may exist among diverse groups; By examining the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people, students will learn that there are in fact many similarities across groups and that there is also great diversity within these groups that are sometimes treated as monolithic.

4. Develop an understanding of and sensitivity to issues involving human rights and migration; The rights of sexual minorities are increasingly becoming a part of an international human rights agenda in terms of migration (e.g., new policies that help a same-sex partner of a lesbian or gay man to reunite with her/his partner, and new policies that grant refugee status for individuals persecuted because of their sexual orientation), family rights (e.g., same-sex marriage, domestic partner legislation), and freedom from criminal prosecution (the right to engage in consensual sexual acts in private with another adult).

5. Develop an awareness of the dynamics of social, political, and/or economic power in the context of any of the above four items. As discussed above, sexual identities, human rights, the construction of tolerance, will all be discussed within the context of specific structural arrangements.

W Criteria: The writing assignments in this course will consist of a fifteen-page term paper, written as three separate five-page papers that will be combined together as well as an essay-based midterm and final exam. The five page papers will each address a particular aspect of sexualities, chosen by the student, in consultation with professor. The papers will be based on independent research. By doing focused research on a particular aspect of sexualities throughout the semester, the students will not only improve their writing and research skills, but they will be able to apply the theoretical concepts learned in class to a particular case study.

The term paper will count for 60% of the grade, the essay exams for 40% of the grade. Thus students can only pass the class if they pass the writing portion of the class. Students will be apprised of this in the course syllabus.

Students will be required to turn in a detailed outline for each of the 3 five page papers that will be returned to the student with comments. Then students will be required to turn in a rough draft of each of the papers, which the professor will return to them with written comments. The comments will be returned prior to the students having to write the next paper. Each of these three papers will serve as a part of their fifteen-page term paper, which they must then turn in at the end of the semester. The term paper must address the comments given on their rough drafts.

Throughout the class, the professor will also provide formal instruction to the entire class based on their needs, as determined by their outlines and rough drafts. The professor will also teach them how to do a research paper.

As stated above, the three five-page papers that serve as rough drafts will be returned with comments. Each subsequent paper should benefit from the comments given on earlier papers. The students will then rewrite each of the papers based on the written comments and combine them into one long research paper to be turned in at the end of the semester.

Supplementary Information : ---THIS COURSE HAS ALREADY BEEN APPROVED AS CA4 AND W BY GEOC. WE WOULD JUST LIKE TO CROSS-LIST IT WITH WOMEN'S STUDIES.