

SOCIOLOGY 2800
Grande Prairie Regional College
HUMAN SEXUALITY
(Fall 2010)
3 UT Credits

Instructor: Alan Segal

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(For all written assignments)

Office Hours: Mondays and Tuesdays 16.30 – 17.15

Course Prerequisite: SO1000

Mode of Delivery: Discussion and occasional lecture

Course Description:

An inquiry into ideas and behaviour of sexuality, and their personal, cultural, and societal implications.

NOTE: This course will examine a wide scan of sexual thought, fantasy, portrayal, understanding, considerations, and general behaviour. Its approach assumes that in a mature society no question is beyond scrutiny. The premise of this course is not to communicate truth or confirm authority of information. The premise is inquiry, and how social authority affects the scope and substance of what we examine. No course can withstand entirely the politics of its content, however, and thus the capacity to offend some who enrol in it. This is true especially of a course in human sexuality. Nevertheless, this course will not treat sexual variety as a series of perversions, nor will it assert the normalcy of one kind of sexuality as opposed to another. It will discuss how, in any society, particular forms of sexuality become "normal" and others "abnormal", how they become acceptable topics of contemplation and conversation, and whether such distinctions help or hinder us. Films and magazines may be shown in class, the subject matter of which might be controversial and offensive. If anything in this statement causes you to think you might find this course terribly offensive, you should reconsider remaining in it.

Required Reading:

Sex, Gender, and Sexuality - Edited by Abby Ferber, Kimberly Holcomb, Tre Wentling
The Reader - Bernhard Schlink

Assignments:

Final Essay or Project [F, D- to A+]:

- The due date for this assignment is the first class of December
- There is a lateness penalty of 1 letter grade per day, including weekends. This applies to the written piece for a project, which will be given to me via email and must arrive by the due date. The email address for all written work is gprcassignments@gmail.com.
- Projects must be accompanied by a written component, but not one as minimally long as an essay. Twelve hundred words is the expected minimum. Projects can be varied, but in the past people have written short stories or a collection of poems, or created something of an artistic nature, such as collages, sculptures, paintings, etc. The written portion explains the sociological intent and message of the work you have created. Projects are also evaluated by other faculty appropriate to the kind of work you submit to me. Therefore I must you're your plan before you proceed with it.
- Essay topics relevant to a sociological analysis of sexuality may be chosen. Critical analysis is emphasized here, using your own and others' ideas. You must utilize some sociological theory or ideas, but don't just fit your writing into the framework of a theory. Do not write a descriptive report; think about the ideas you express. Try to explain why these ideas persuade you. It might help to set up your essay as a debate.
- Research beyond the assigned books is required. While your own thinking is the most important requirement, research is valuable and therefore obligatory. The research can be from various sources, but survey texts are not in themselves sufficient. Six sources are required. Three at least must be academic references. All sources must be clearly and properly identified. Failure to observe each of these minimum requirements will result in a slightly lower grade. The purpose of the research is to enable you to write a more informed analytical paper. References must appear in the main text of your assignment, and in a Works Cited section at the end of the paper. Both are required. If either is omitted, your assignment will be reduced by one letter grade per section. All documentation [referencing] must be consistent with **MLA** style. Remember that not all disciplines accept the same approach to writing up reference.
- You must reference more than quotations. Other authors' interpretations, analyses, perceptions, or ideas, deserve credit in your papers. Mentioning them does not disqualify your view of their analyses.
- You may use first person words like 'I', but the paper is not to be an opinion piece.
- The expected standard is 2000 words. Your mark will be reduced by one letter grade for inadequate length. This applies only to papers that are too brief.
- All work must clearly stipulate your name and course number.
- If you hand in the assignment before the due date, I will comment fully on your essay, or on your project's written part and you will have the option of rewriting the paper or re-doing the project. Otherwise, I will provide a general comment at the end of your papers or projects.
- Grammar is important to communicating precise meaning. Grammar will not be valued as highly as content, but it will be evaluated and may affect your grade for the assignment.

Midterm Essay [F, D- to A+]

Select any of the entries in the main text that are not assigned for class discussion. Write a commentary of at least 1000 words on the sociological, theoretical, or philosophical implications of the material in that article. No research or referencing is necessary. **Due date:** October 25th

Two Journals [C- to C+]:

Due Date: First class of October and November.

Each journal must be at least 350 words. Anything pertaining to sexuality, ideas introduced in class discussions or lectures, class interaction, etc., is suitable. Observations about, and suggestions for, the course are also suitable. No research is necessary or expected. The journals are an informal type of communication with me.

Discussion Bonus

- Class discussion is a vital aspect of this course.
- Everyone may (but not necessarily will) receive a bonus mark for the QUALITY of your class discussion, based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation. Discussion postings on Moodle will be considered class participation.
- You will be eligible only if you display commitment to the course by completing reading and written assignments. Although attendance is not relevant to the regular assignments for the course, it is important to your eligibility for a bonus mark. If you are absent for more than 4 classes, you will not receive a bonus grade.
- The bonus mark offers an A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used. The bonus effect will not cause more than a 3-level rise in final grades.

Tabulation of Marks:

Your final mark will be formulated by adding the grade point value for each letter grade you receive and dividing by the maximum Grade Point total you can attain given the number of required assignments (12.6).

NOTE: (1) No class averaging will be done. (2) All marks will appear on Blackboard. You are responsible for monitoring your grade input, and informing me that a mark has not been entered.

Grade Equivalency:

| | |
|----|---------|
| A+ | 95-100% |
| A | 90-94% |
| A- | 87-89% |
| B+ | 83-86% |
| B | 80-82% |
| B- | 77-79% |
| C+ | 73-76% |
| C | 65-72% |
| C- | 60-64% |
| D+ | 55-59% |
| D | 50-54% |
| D- | 45-49% |

NOTE: On the College's marking grid there is no D-. Therefore no such final mark will be recorded. However, for the assignments that will be evaluated on a full grading grid, I will use D- as a non-failing mark. All marks will appear on Moodle. **You are responsible for monitoring your grade input, and informing me that a mark has not appeared for which you deserve credit.**

DISCUSSION SEQUENCE

1. Introduction to course: General and Sociological
2. Lecture: General Theoretical Perspectives
3. Lecture: The Body
4. Lecture: Queer Theory
5. Lecture: Pornography
6. The Reader: Part 1
7. The Reader: Rest of Book
8. SGS: Articles 1 and 2

What dualisms are dueling according to Fausto-Sterling? Prepare to discuss what questions are pertinent to understanding social expressions of masculinity, and the physical underpinnings of masculinity. In what sense might sexual identity compose a fundamental reality? The second article posits an association between gender and sexuality. What is the substance of the association? The existence of multiple genders in other societies implies a variety of sexual and identity possibilities. What are these?

9. SGS: Article 7

How can sex and virginity be ambiguous? Is the ambiguity outlined by Carpenter a construction of her won, or does she persuasively articulate an argument? What approach must researchers use to minimize distortions of responses?

10. SGS: Article 10

Abby Ferber fuses in her analysis, concepts that sociologists often allude to: Sexuality, gender, and race. Can you see the value of her approach, and would her article be hampered argumentatively if she had not addressed this conceptual troika? Prepare to explain all possible answers, at the same time developing an explanation of how these three interrelate.

11. SGS: Article 14

We will discuss the first two discussion questions listed at the start of the article.

12. SGS: Article 25

Ideas of functionality are present in many academic disciplines. Sociology is not exceptional. But were you surprised to read the title of this article? Have you ever applied the concept to your orgasmic existence? How important to our cultural discourse is the idea of function, and how prominently does it settle on issues of orgasm? What assumptions about this physiological response are current in today's Canada? Does the history of the vibrator spark questions in your mind about social understanding of human sexuality?

13. SGS: Articles 30 and 34

Explain the 'third sex'. In your own experience, have you seen the development of sexual perceptions based on presumed race or ethnicity? Why does Lee refer to the 'geography of sex'? Go back to our look at theories of otherness and the body. How might they pertain to this article and the one on rapacious hostility toward native women? What is Smith telling you when she asserts the existence of a war?

14. SGS: Articles 43, 46

What is queer identity, and do we really 'fashion' identities, including queer ones? What is the outcome and the provocation of sexual orientation meeting gender identity? Is either orientation or identity a more elemental idea in understanding ourselves, and in being people in society? To borrow from Devor, 'who are "we"?'

15. SGS: Articles 44, 45 & 49

Apart from the specific purposes and convictions of Christian mothers, do their actions as described in this article, sound very different from how you parent or might parent? What is the 'Christian' viewpoint as presented in Quiverfull? When Joyce mentions the Quiverfull narrative, what is she thinking of? Is this a suitable parallel to what Cathy Cohen's 'indigenous definitions of blackness'? Cohen includes in her text a citation from bell hooks, that addresses the dilemma of conflicting identities. What is the character of the conflict and the subsequent dilemma? Do you have a sexual, social, or some other, narrative? Is this connected to being a work in progress?