

SOCIOLOGY 2800

Grande Prairie Regional College

**HUMAN SEXUALITY**

(FALL 2003)

**Course Description:**

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

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Office Hours: Mondays & Wednesdays: 15.00 - 15.50    Tuesdays & Thursdays: 14.30 - 15.30  
Or By appointment

**GOALS:**

1. To understand how sociological concepts may help us analyze and comprehend human sexuality.
2. To develop analytical and critical thinking skills through discussions of issues relevant to sexuality.
3. To become aware of historical and contemporary attitudes, practices, and values relevant to sexuality.

**Course Prerequisite:** SOCIOLOGY 1000

**CREED AND CAUTION:** 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 the 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 enroll 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 offensive, you should reconsider remaining in it.**

### **Required Reading:**

Sexual Lives: A reader on the theories and realities of human sexualities - Robert Heasley, Betsy Crane

Harmful to minors - Judith Levine

### **Assignments:**

#### **Essay or Project:**

- 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. If you decide to do a project, which you end up submitting late, or on the due date, but at a time when you are uncertain if I am on campus, have another faculty member or regular employee of the college sign and date it. Initials are not acceptable and signatures must be legible. Where the person works in the College must be indicated as well. Lateness penalties apply to essays or projects, but *all written work for this course must be communicated by regular email text*. Do not send anything as an attachment; cut and paste the material.
- Essays or projects are marked on the new grading scale. See below for more information.
- If you are writing an essay, you will choose a topic relevant to a sociological analysis of sexuality.
- Critically analyze the topic, using your own and others' ideas. You must utilize some formal 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.

— Research beyond the textbooks 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 other survey texts are not in themselves sufficient.

— *Six sources are required. Two must be academic books, three must be references from articles in an academic journal or academic anthology, and one can be informal, such as something from a newspaper, magazine, or a website. You can use more than three, and more than the minimum specified in each category. However, failure to observe each these minimum requirements will result in a slightly lower grade.*

— The purpose of the research is to enable you to write an analytical paper. You may use first person words like I, but the paper is not a large opinion piece. It is intended to be analytical, based on thought and ideas, not quickly-generated opinions.

— The expected standard is 1500 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.

— *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.

— If you hand in the assignment before the due date, I will comment fully on your essay, or on your project, and you will have the option of rewriting the paper. 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.

— 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.

— Accompanying all of these must be an 800 word statement explaining the sociological intent and message of the work you have created.

— Other projects may be acceptable. Speak to me about what you have in mind.

### **Three Journals:**

— Due the first class of each month of the semester, beginning in October.

— Each will receive a mark between C+ and B. Each journal must be at least 200 words. Remember that all written work must be sent by email.

- \_ 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.
- \_ You will be eligible only if you display commitment to the course by doing your reading and completing the required assignments.
- \_ The bonus mark offers an A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used.
- Discussion postings on webCT will be considered class participation.
- **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 5 classes, you will not receive a bonus grade.**

### **Tabulating Grades**

All letter grades in the new system correspond to numerical values called grade points. Consult your college calendar for the conversion. The College uses the following scale:

A+, A, A-, B+, B, B-, C+, C, C-, D+, D

Your final grade will be formulated by adding the grade point values for each letter grade you receive, and dividing the total by the number of assignments you have for this course [4], not including the bonus mark.

**NOTE:** No class averaging will be done. All marks will appear on webCT. If you are unfamiliar with this system, employees of the library will instruct you for access. **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. **Heasley & Crane [HC]: Preface, Introduction**
  - An introduction, and less often a preface, usually sets the stage for an book, letting you in on assumptions and purposes. Summarize H & C's introductory ideas and cautionary advice.
  - Do you concur with the point on page 6?
  - What notions and assumptions of pleasure do you think of after reading the last paragraph on page 7?
3. **HC: Part 1 Introduction & Reading 1; Levine: Foreword, Acknowledgments, Introduction**
  - How would you respond to H & C's questions on page 17, regarding norms and customs of heterosexuality in your life?
  - What thoughts about your own lives arose as you read the two sexual journeys? Did either of them 'ring true'?
  - In the Foreword of Levine's book, Elders alludes to American culture's uncertainty about sex education, and sexuality in general. And Levine herself introduces a relation of peril and pleasure. Could any of this writing be linked to the last question of the previous discussion section? Does any of it fit with, challenge, undermine or what you have read so far in HC?
  - Look at the second note of the Foreword in Levine's book, on page 227, and consider what you expect/ed from sex education? Is there a difference between this and sexuality education? If so, what is the difference, and which of these two approaches do you prefer? If you were asked to establish such a program, what principles would frame your "curriculum"?
  - What is fear? What is it to Levine, who quickly introduces us to her view that fear is pervasive in American society? To the limited degree she so far elaborates on it, why does it exist? What facets of this social condition does she mention? Do you think Canadian society experiences similar apprehension? Would you offer other words than "apprehension" to describe fright?
  - Can you generalize about our society's perceptions of children? Is any part of the generalization compatible with Levine's early description of it?
  - Explain Levine's statement that childhood is ideological.
  - Do you accept a relationship between pleasure and entitlement? Are pleasure, entitlement, and protection mutually exclusive categories? Should risk trump all of them? How do/should we

conceptualize risk?

#### 4. **HC: Readings 2-4, 6**

- What do analysts mean by social constructionism? If you were asked to build an evidentiary case of this in everyday life, what aspects of our mental, sociopolitical, and cultural existence would you include in your report?
- What are we doing when we deconstruct something?
- We will not yet discuss this, but you should begin contemplating whether a relationship exists in our society between identity and sexuality. Is either critical to the other? How would you explain identity?
- Assess the cogency of the list of myths on pages 34-37.
- In what sense can sexuality be invented? Does Weeks establish a credible case for his position?
- Why should we be alert to the danger of understanding “all sexual acts by their function”[page 41]? Is Foucault’s approach to exploring sexuality, in which social class and how it is defined is the core of sexual regimes, a better way than reviewing sexual acts, for us to analyze its significance?
- If religion is important to your understanding and perhaps experiencing of sexuality, does it mesh with ideas expressed in the fourth reading? What logics of tolerance and intolerance do you perceive in this Reading?
- What overview can you offer of sexuality research in the US in the 20<sup>th</sup> century?
- Why did di Mauro include a section on the political history of sexuality research?

#### 5. **Levine: Chapter 1**

- After considering this chapter, do you perceive sexual commodification as Levine does? What is sexual commodification, and why does Levine include it in her discussion?
- Can we have culture without suppression? Is censorship more an act of: suppression, protection, nurturing, or....?
- What responses do you have after reading Levine’s quote by Penelope Leach on page 18?
- How should we evaluate knowledge, protection, entitlement and responsibility, rights, and sexual freedom? Is this list adequate for a discussion of sexuality and children?
- Is all risk hazardous? Is avoidance of risk critical to our emotional well-being?
- Of what political and sociological value to various groups in the society is ‘risk’? How do we learn what is risky and what is not? What messages about risk are \_out there\_ in society? Do they profoundly inform us about ourselves, our lives, our vulnerability and our possibilities?
- How would you describe your childhood knowledge and understanding about relationships,

sexuality, or any other relevant realm of human experience you may recall? When we say we understand something, what do we refer to? Is age-appropriateness a suitable concept for any kind of personal development?

6. **HC: Part 2 Introduction, Readings 7 - 11, 13 & 14**

- How would you say you became sexual? What is it to you to be sexual? Does Reading 13 contain anything that reflects this meaning?
- Is there anything in your life that has symbolic power, in the way the 'kotex diary' has for Black?
- Can you identify contemporary forms of ignorance? What other types of understanding are either available to us or should be generated?
- What accounts for our preoccupation with what is normal? Do you agree that we have such a preoccupation?
- If you felt a need to list the "components" of sexual orientation, would you think of what is mentioned on page 150?
- Does society differentiate between adulthood and childhood? If so, articulate the difference. Does our society meaningfully differentiate between adult and child sexuality? If so, does the list on page 102 enclose well these differences?
- Reading 8 suggests we misinterpret children's sexual behaviour. Are you persuaded by the power of the argument? Whatever your answer, does adult anxiety about children's sexuality reveal anything to us about adulthood?
- Prepare a summary of and a response to the structuring of heterosexuality as discussed in Reading 8.
- Can we enunciate a viable concept of maturity that goes beyond a checklist of do's and don't's? If so, what is maturity and how is it fostered?
- Why are blow jobs boring?

7. **HC: Reading 12**

- What social or intellectual value is gained by approaching the topic of disability through a discussion of defectiveness or minority status? Does disability compel a separate focus on sexuality? If so, is this because of the social implications of how we define and enforce disability, or because of inherent developmental characteristics?
- What points are made in this reading that you think are especially telling?
- What is the difference between delayed and thwarted development?
- Are parents more significant to the sexual evolution of disabled children than to non-disabled ones?
- What manifestations of gender are discussed in this selection?

8. **HC: Part 3 Introduction, Readings 17, 19, & 20**

- In the fields of gender and sexuality, a debate persists regarding how these may overlap or exist as discrete categories. What overlap or separation is suggested in the introduction to this third section of the book?
- Are the authors of Reading 17 saying that sexual desire is a gendered experience? What do they indicate is the influence of gender?
- How do they explain desire and understand desire? How would you explain desire?
- What might a sociobiologist say about desire?
- To what extent do you think desire and fantasy are interwoven? To what extent do you think desire and repression are interwoven? What is repression? What social conditions permit us to 'own up' to the varieties of our sexual desires? What conditions foster inhibition?
- Are social constructionists being realistic when they say, as stated on page 193, that our desires and behaviours are selected from what is socially available and made appealing?
- Why must Black Masculinity be reconstructed? From what condition, and into what condition, is this reconstruction to occur?
- Does becoming a man in Black American culture differ from what you have experienced directly, or have observed in men around you? Why are race and gender connected by Hooks?
- Of what utility to Hooks' position is Paul Hoch's quoted view on page 22, that masculinity is conceptually and profoundly latched to sexual repression and private property?
- Does the manifestation of gender and heterosexuality have rituals similar to those cited in Reading 20?
- What is meant by heteronormativity?

9. **HC: Readings 21 & 22**

- What is discourse? In what sense can we view country music, in fact all music, as forms of discourse?
- What messages, assumptions, and characterizations of gender are discussed in this reading?
- Are these part of the idea discussed in the second assigned Reading? Can we dismantle gender polarization and compulsory heterosexuality, and will this be partly achieved through country music, or any type of music?
- Evaluate Butler's, Fausto-Sterling's, Douglas' ideas. Are they always mutually reinforcing?

10. **HC: Readings 23 & 24**

- What is Hunter's intent in writing about same closets, different doors? What does sameness allude to? What meaningful outcomes arise from his passage through a different door?
- Who are Feinberg's transgender warriors? Comment on the use of this imagery.
- Is a cross-cultural approach to information-gathering and social change a reliable pathway to expanding our understanding, and transforming cultures?

11. **HC: All of Part 4, Except Readings 26 & 33**

- Do you agree with the first statement in the Introduction, page 281? In what ways might we understand that our bodies are sexual before consciousness of this? In what ways might such a statement not be upheld?
- What is a sociological analysis of sex and the body?
- To what extent does our physical body reflect our sexuality? What does this question seek to answer?
- What is the sociological significance of rituals? Does the sociological meaning of a ritual change if the form of it alters? Cultures seek to consecrate through ritual. What rituals in your life have this stature?
- How do medicine, morality, and public management intersect? Is this intersection smooth or rough? When we speak of the medicalization of something, what are we saying?
- Prior to reading selection 28, did you consider the first male ejaculation was wrapped up in a taboo? What taboo is Frankel discussing? Prepare to discuss sociological explanations and implications of a taboo.
- Is the concept of socially camouflaged technologies also an example of a taboo? If so, is it similar to that discussed in Reading 28? If not, articulate the distinction.
- Does the history of the vibrator yield any generalizations about how human societies are organized? Does it exemplify the three-pronged intersection mentioned above?
- In Reading 29 the vibrator is shown as a socially significant artifact. What can we learn about human societies after reading this article?
- Do you see connections between this selection, and those on 'female viagra' and our acceptance of sexual behaviour in 'the old'?
- Identify Fausto-Sterling's five sexes. What are they, and why did they need a revisit? What is her purpose in stipulating five? Could there be more?
- Speculate on our associations of sex, intimacy, self-image, and illness. Are illness and disease the same discourse? Do they refer to the same emotional/mental/physical experience? How would you evaluate their sociological significance?
- Compare your negotiations of sexuality and intimacy with what is described in this Reading.

12. **HC: Part 5 Introduction, Readings 36, 38 - 41**

- Are you convinced that male drinking and fighting, and female ‘disordered’ eating and ‘obsessions’ with personal attractiveness, “all about sexual orientation”? What does the notion of ‘queer’ encompass?
- We take for granted many elements of our lives. Before enrolling in this course, did you contemplate a link between heterosexuality and social theory? What social theories are discussed here? What are their salient points?
- What do sociologists mean by ‘social relations’?
- How does the boundary between private and public domains pertain to this discussion of sexuality?
- Why write about citizenship in this article?
- Do you consider bisexuality an orientation? Why or why not? Does Queer Theory apply to bisexuality? To heterosexuality?
- Which questions on the Heterosexual Questionnaire do you think are most and least deserving of being included?
- When reading the 41<sup>st</sup> entry, did you identify more with one of the people mentioned, including Josiah, than with the others?

13. **HC: Readings 42 & 43**

- How does any kind of sexuality become a straitjacket? How does the author consider his homophobia to be his? What elements of ‘freedom’ and of a straitjacket experience, are evident in Reading 43?

14. **HC: All of Part 6**

- What kinds of compatibility, as well as of tension, are present in the accounts of sex workers, the discussion of ‘unchastity’, and the idea of commodified, exploitative sex?
- What social processes enable us to understand sexual connotations? Do we prepare people well for this understanding? How would you place your own lives in this development? Were there connotations you hadn’t thought of that now, looking back on your life, you can detect more clearly? What social experiences enhance or limit the development of connotative awareness?
- Prepare to discuss the unchastity-impurity-identity-defilement reasoning.
- What are the social consequences of unchastity?
- Is “sex exploiter” more than a slogan? Does it do justice to notions of consent, desire, attraction, maturity, development?
- What does Davidson mean by “pedophilia and beyond”?

- What questions and criteria are relevant to a discussion of child-adult sexual relations? How should we define childhood and adulthood? What questions and criteria does Davidson deploy? Does she convince you of their value?
- What is the nature of Valverde's "innovative approach" to pornography? Is the innovation worthwhile?
- What is self-coercion? What is the eroticization of domination?
- Explain the argument in Reading 48 that male sexuality is alienated by pornography? What does alienation mean in this context?
- Why is the loss of subjectivity something to be avoided?
- Is Brod's use of Marxist thought helpful to the discussion? How do you interpret the last paragraph on page 481?
- What is a feminist erotica?
- What are your thoughts on Gloria Steinem's idea that erotica is about sexuality, pornography is about power? How can we identify, when applying this idea to other matters, when relations are more about one of these than the other?

15. **Levine: Chapter 2**

- How reliable are social labels? What do we expect to achieve by using any of them?
- What labels in current use, sexual or otherwise, come to your mind?
- Broadening Levine's comment on page 26, do you think we fear people not because they are deviant, but because they are ordinary?
- Levine implies young people who earn 'adult wages' may stretch their social experience to include 'adult sexual license'. Does she have a point?
- Does sex validate us? What is validation in such a case, and why is it validating? Is this part of adult sexual license?
- How does false security fit into Levine's argument?

16. **HC: All of Part 7, Except Reading 53**

- What is Regina Rivers' point about an alchemy of healing?
- What is Brownmiller's argument about a mass psychology of rape? How does she use the concept in this selection?
- Using Reading 54 as a launchpad, what concepts would be the foundation of your Sexual Offense policy? Do you think the final document reflects well the principles discussed in the Reading? Would you be satisfied and secure on a campus with such a policy?
- What is your assessment of the positions of the men referred to in Reading 57?

- Discuss Beneke's assertion on page 545, that "one can be intimidated by one's own language".

### 17. **Levine: Chapters 3 & 4**

- Is sex a rational experience? Is sexuality receptive to rational intervention? If so, is it entirely receptive, or is it more viable in some contexts than in others? Does therapy count as rational intervention?
- Is forced reporting of fantasies a justifiable form of therapy?
- Prepare to discuss the quote attributed to Dr. Kutner on page 45, that normal behaviour can be inappropriate. What criteria of normalcy and appropriateness are implicit in this position? Can notions of normalcy, and the power exerted to enforce it, stand up to the range of sexual identities, sentiments, and expressions we have discussed?
- Do you accept 'sexualization' as a reasonable analytical precept? Do you accept 'desexualization' as a reasonable analytical precept?
- What might explain the disparate data reported on page 58?
- How might we conceptualize, and evaluate, consent, safety, and harm? Have you ever thought of what Mary Douglas is quoted on page 71 as having said: that danger emerges from transitional states? Prepare to discuss interpretations of this.
- Does Levine exaggerate the vitality of cultural codes in social learning, and in our social behaviour? Identify as many cultural codes regarding sexuality as you can think of. In what ways do you find them helpful, obstructive, hurtful, liberating, etc.? Is gender a factor in how we construct, communicate, and enforce these codes?
- When, if ever, should we determine law, policy, or social attitude based on differences of attraction, or types of love?
- Are you comfortable with Allie Kilpatrick's recommendations, as presented on page 85?

### 18. **Levine: Chapter 5**

- What is the author saying when she refers to no-sex education?
- Is the classification of the debate in terms of right and left wing sex education analytically rigorous? What does either of these substantively mean?
- Reconsider your earlier thoughts on sex/sexuality education. In light of this chapter, have you changed your ideas or conclusions? Is the sex education described here similar to what you experienced?
- Is the logic of the abstinence advocated on page 95 solid? Is Debra Haffner's criticism of it [page 109] reasonable?
- What deliberations are relevant to deciding the boundaries of parental authority, in terms of

- purposes and their implementation?
  - What is maturity, especially from Levine's perspective?
19. **HC: All of Part 8**
- What or who, in your mind, count as sexual minorities?
  - To what degree do the entries in this section on sex, politics, and policies, adequately delve into the implications of the title?
  - Does Reading 61 offer important direction to people interested in overhauling sex education in schools? What is your response to ideas expressed in Reading 62?
  - Do any of these essays assist your analysis of Levine's book?
20. **Levine: Chapters 6 & 7**
- What implications occur to you regarding the 1994 poll results mentioned on page 126?
  - Are there gaps in adult understanding of adolescent sexuality?
  - What is the missing discourse of desire?
21. **Levine: Chapters 8 & 9**
- Although she offers no evidence of kinds and extent of parent-child discussions, do you agree with Levine that few parents converse about sex with their children? If so, and if she is incidentally accurate, what might this say about adulthood in general?
  - Why does Levine speak of truthful fictions? What are these? Are they sociologically valuable to us? What kinds of narrative is Levine striving for?
  - What ideas occur to you as you read from page 160 to the end of chapter 9? Has Levine touched on an important part of understanding sexuality and its expression, or is she overemphasizing the issues?
22. **Levine: Chapters 10 & 11, Epilogue**
- Prepare to discuss the points raised in the last paragraph on page 183.
  - Should society pay heed to the "don't rush to civilize" advice discussed on page 189?
  - Are children entitled to privacy, and if so, in the ways cited by Levine?
  - Is 'outercourse' viable?
  - Why has Levine called her last chapter 'community'?
  - Is the idea of citizenship applied to children a viable concept? What would viability mean in this

case?

23. **HC: Readings 64, 65, 67 & 68**

- Has Zack's father taught you something about parenting toward sexuality?
- What is heteroflexibility and are you persuaded by the idea of it? Are we moving closer to this formulation and enactment of human sexuality?
- What is the American style of sex? Is 'style' a good word to use in this case?
- What is the Tantric Vision and its possibility for human sexual intimacy?
- Does this last section cover well what and how we might dream of a sexual future?