

## SOCIOLOGY 2800

Grande Prairie Regional College

### HUMAN SEXUALITY FALL 2005

Instructor: Alan Segal

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Office Hours: Mondays 14:30 – 15:30; Tuesdays & Thursdays: 15:30 – 16:30  
Or By appointment

#### **Course Description:**

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

**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 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 offensive, you should reconsider remaining in it.

#### **Required Reading:**

*Harmful to Minors - Judith Levine*  
*SO2800 Course Pak*

## Assignments:

### **Essay or Project [A+ - D]:**

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 sent via email, and not as an attachment. Send to [outpost@telus.net](mailto:outpost@telus.net)*

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 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 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.

### **Conference Essay [A+ - D]:**

This conference will occur on GPRC's campus October 14-16. Your essay will consist of an overview of the sessions presented, including the keynote address. You will then focus on one of the sessions, and discuss the ideas introduced and your analysis of them. My session will be omitted from this choice.

### **Three Journals [C or C+]:**

Due the first class of each month of the semester, beginning in October. Each journal must be at least 200 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.

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 Blackboard 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**

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

All letter grades correspond to numerical values called grade points. Your final grade will be formulated by adding the grade point values for each letter grade you receive, and dividing the sum by the total number of GPA you could have received (14.9). The bonus mark is not factored into this total.

**NOTE:** No class averaging will be done. All marks will appear on Blackboard. 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

Articles in the course pak, as much as possible, will be read sequentially.

1. **Introduction to course: General and Sociological**
2. **Reading 1: The Repressive Hypothesis by Michel Foucault**

Discourse is an extremely important concept to Foucault's work. What is this it meant to address? Why is it important to him?  
How might you explain 'repressive hypothesis', 'perverse implantation', and 'incitement to discourse'?

Foucault, early in the Selection, mentions confession, particularly confessions of the flesh. Of what value is this reference to his larger argument?  
Not long into any of his works, Foucault inserts the idea of power. Explain his understanding of power, and how it fits or not with his ideas outlined in the first reading.  
What is your interpretation of the comment on page 43 of the Reading, that a "medical category was constituted from the moment it was characterized"?  
Prepare to discuss the paragraph on page 49 of the Selection.
3. **Reading 2: The Invention of Sexuality by Jeffrey Weeks**

What convinces Weeks that sexuality was/is invented? Did he convince you his conclusion is substantial? How might he explain invention to the class?  
What perspectives does Weeks bring to the argument?  
Why does Weeks include a discussion of kinship, family, economy, social organization, and politics?

**'Reading' 2A: Class lecture on Queer Theory**

4. **Reading 3: Christianity to 1500 by Merry Wiesner-Hanks**

We usually assume that concepts we think ‘originate’ in religion, are stable throughout history. Is this the outlook communicated in this selection? What similarities/dissimilarities do you perceive in the information outlined by W-H, between what you identify as contemporary christian philosophies and those of pre-1500 europe?

Is there a christian tenet of sexuality? If so, is it distinct from judaic or pagan principles?

Were you surprised by any part of this reading? What relationship does W-H hint at, between culture and sexuality?

Why does W-H discuss the middle ages by dividing it into different periods?

Why mention heresy and confession in an academic treatment of sexuality? What is orthodoxy?
5. **Reading 4: The Pre-Enlightenment Legacy by Rudi Bley**

What is the substance of the legacy presented by Bley? What are its ideas, assumptions, and motives?

Why were specific sexual acts associated with cultural, or what we now call ethnic, groups?

What explains Bley’s title on page 22 - “Constructing the new World’s Sexuality”?

How can sexuality be constructed? Weren’t people sexual before the arrival of the europeans?

Explain the idea of ‘the Other’.

Do contemporary beliefs regarding sexuality contain ideas of paradise? If so, what does paradise refer to? What ideas of paradise were active, according to Bley, in the time periods discussed by him?

On page 45 of the Reading, Bley writes of the mapping of mankind. What meaning[s] is intended?
6. **Reading 5: The Birds and the Bees by Bruce Bagemihl**

After reading the chapter, explain the opening quote from Haldane’s work on page 9 of the Reading.

Why does Bagemihl think it necessary to explain his terminology on page 12?

What explanation does he provide?

Has Bagemihl persuaded you of the reliability of his main thesis? Are the author’s assumptions about observed behaviour persuasive? What criteria must be met in your mind before you can answer yes or no the previous question?

How is gender utilized conceptually in this Reading?
7. **Reading 6: Humanistic Animals, Animalistic Humans by Bruce Bagemihl**

Is it a stretch to think about animals having culture? If not, has Bagemihl used it well given his purpose in writing the book, of which you will by now have read the first two chapters? Can culture in animals be thought of in the ways we contemplate human cultures?

How would you explain sexual orientation and sexual preference, and are these viable to discuss in an analysis of non-human animal life?

Why do you think the author has written this work?

8. **Reading 7: Così Fan Tutti.... By Phillip Vannini**  
What is a synopticon and a panopticon? Why is it mentioned in conjunction with pornography....and with the internet?  
Vannini includes discussion about power in this Reading. What importance does this have in relation to his general purpose for the article?  
What is meant by performing a pornographic body, on page 83 of the Reading?
9. **Reading 8: The Naked Subject.... By Rob Cover**  
Cover differentiates between nakedness and nudity. Does he clarify the difference, and why does he consider the distinction necessary to his main point[s] in this article? What is the premise of the difference? Do you agree with the distinction he has outlined, and the basis for it?  
How is our culture affected by the ideas written about in this selection?  
The author criticizes postmodern thought for its impact on how we conceptualize sex, sexuality, and especially contexts without clothes. What is the substance of his criticism?
10. **Reading 9: Prostitution and Male Supremacy by Andrea Dworkin**  
Prepare to discuss Dworkin's views on pornography. If you concur with her analysis, is it applicable, do you think, to our culture only, or universal to all cultures? If you disagree with her analysis, do you nevertheless perceive applicability?  
Explain Dworkin's idea of male supremacy.
11. **Reading 11: Forbidden Science**  
Prepare for a class discussion on the politics of research and analysis, and the social value of suppressing or permitting research.
12. **Reading 12: The Death of the Stork.... By Wendy Simonds**  
What is this selection written to achieve? What might be a good approach in sex education? Ought we to have it? What general purpose does/could it serve?
13. **Harmful to Minors: Introduction, Chapter 1.... by Judith Levine**  
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. 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?

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 does false security fit into Levine's argument?

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?

Does society constructively differentiate between adulthood and childhood? If so, articulate the difference. Does our society constructively differentiate between adult and child sexuality?

#### 14. **Levine: Chapters 2 - 7**

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?

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?

What is Levine 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?

Are there gaps in adult understanding of adolescent sexuality? What is the missing discourse of desire?

#### 15. **Levine: Chapters 8 - 11, and the Epilogue**

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? 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?

Is the idea of citizenship applied to children a viable concept? What would viability mean in this case?

#### 16. **Reading 13: The Social Control of Adult-Child Sex by Jeffrey Mullis and Dawn Baunach**

What is the argument presented by the authors?

Do historical and cultural comparisons serve the authors well as a basis for understanding? What assumptions underlie an affirmative and a negative response to this question?

What perspectives of social control do Mullis and Baunach consider important to their article? Do you find yourself more attuned to one or more of the varieties cited?



17. **Reading 14: Sites, Settlements, and Urban Sex.... by Gayle Rubin**  
Why apply archaeology to a study of gay leathermen? How does Rubin justify her combining of demography, settlement patterns, urban environments, and sexuality? What additional concepts does she introduce as elements of her position?
18. **Reading 15: Sexual Culture and Politics in Contemporary Russia by Igor Kon**  
In what sense can we say that a country possesses a sexual culture? How can such a culture diverge from the predominant culture of any society? Isn't sexuality universal, and therefore unjustified as a supposition of discussion that focuses only on one country?  
Explain the connection between sex, sexual expression, nationalism, religion, and politics.
19. **Reading 16: The Five Sexes Revisited by Anne Fausto-Sterling**  
In a society which accepts two genders and a little bit of drift, how might the general public react to Fausto-Sterling's five sexes? What are they? Do F-S's assumption[s] of gender hold in each category?  
What is meant by the section title on page 13 of the Reading, "Moving beyond the Sexes?"
20. **Reading 17: Sociocultural Representations of the Vagina by Braun and Wilkinson**  
How can a part of the body be subject sociological and cultural variations/representations? Does this indicate body parts are mere points of interpretation? What about the vagina do the authors think is sociocultural? What is meant by "the vagina as absence" (page 19 of the Reading)? In what sense can identity be over-determined?  
When people say they are knowledgeable about their bodies, what do they ordinarily refer to? What general criteria for this kind of knowledge would you stipulate?
21. **Reading 18: From Dogs' Testicles....By Emily Banks**  
Explain the necessity for a small section on terminology on page 3 of the Reading? How and why has menopause become culturally significant in our recent and distant past? What interpretations and attitudes have 'attached themselves' to menopausal conditions?  
Culture and politics often 'collaborate' with each other in regulating social behaviour. Does this item on menopause tread into this territory?  
Were you surprised at the question page 12, "what is menopause..."? Prepare to explain your answer. Why is the question asked?
22. **Reading 19: Outcourse: Body and Self in Text Cybersex by Waskul, Douglass, and Edgley**  
How can any author write about the body and the cyber world at the same time? Aren't they incompatible concepts, one being virtual?  
What are outcourse, and enselfment (page 29 of the Reading)?

23. **Reading 20: Of Shit and the Soul... by Allison Muri**

What is cybernetic disembodiment? How can anybody become disembodied?  
Why mention souls and shit in the title of this article?