

SEP. 19 2002

SOCIOLOGY 2800

Grande Prairie Regional College

HUMAN SEXUALITY

(FALL 2002)

Course Description:

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

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Office Hours: Mondays: 15.00 - 15.50 Tuesdays & Thursdays: 13.45 - 14.20 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 the content of this course is not truth or the 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:

Sexuality and its discontents - Jeffrey Weeks

Harmful to minors - Judith Levine

A defence of masochism - Anita Phillips

Assignments:

Essay or Project:

- The due date for this assignment is the first class of December
- There is a lateness penalty of 1 stanine per day. A 1-stanine penalty per day will be applied, 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 a 9-point stanine scale
- 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. 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 a half-stanine for inadequate length. This applies only to papers that are too brief.
- All work must clearly stipulate your name, ID number, and course and section numbers.
- 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 stanine 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.
- 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 is worth a maximum of 1.5 stanines. **However, a benchmark of 1 will apply to all**

journals.

- Each journal must be at least one page. 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 will not exceed 3.
- Discussion postings on webCT will be considered class participation.
- You will be eligible for a bonus mark only if you display commitment to the course by reading and completing the required 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 5 classes, you will not receive a bonus grade.**

Tabulating Grades

The total of all stanine marks available for assignments is 13.5. Your marks will be totaled out of 13.5, a percentage will be obtained, and the percentage will be reconverted to a final stanine grade according to the following table.

| Stanine Grade | Percentage Equivalent |
|---------------|-----------------------|
| 9 | 90 - 100 |
| 8 | 80 - 89 |
| 7 | 70 - 79 |
| 6 | 60 - 69 |
| 5 | 55 - 59 |
| 4 | 50 - 54 |
| 3 | 40 - 49 |
| 2 | 20 - 39 |
| 1 | 0 - 19 |

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. Weeks: Preface & Chapter 1
 - What do you imagine Edward Carpenter meant by the brief excerpt on page 1?
 - Weeks tries to explain sex and sexuality, and to outline intellectual and social complications arising from our interpretations of them. Prepare to discuss Weeks' explanations, cautions, and concerns.
 - Why does Weeks suggest a need for a politics of desire? Why does he connect this to a concept of a politics of choice?
3. Phillips: Introduction & Chapter 1
 - Why does Phillips associate rescue with masochism?
 - In a general comment on culture, Phillips asserts evidence of a wide spectrum of masochism. What is her early argument here, and for the moment, are you drawn to the logic of her position? Can you think of examples she has not mentioned? Do you dispute any item on her list?
 - Does Phillips convincingly introduce a concept of masochism? How do you conceptualize masochism?
 - What does Phillips mean by "the discourse of sexology" [page 18]?
4. Weeks: Chapters 2 & 3
 - Why should we revisit the sexual revolution? What might be gained from doing so?
 - Is Weeks' reference to a crisis overblown? How are revolution and crisis intertwined?
 - What are the underlying principles of the new moralism Weeks perceives? Why refer to it as

moralism rather than morality?

5. Phillips: Chapter 2

- Do you concur with Phillips' statement [page 37] that masochism has become a cultural mixed bag? If you agree with her general perception, do you also accept what she includes in the bag?
- How might cultural politics affect our awareness and insight into sexuality?
- What counts as a sexual act? Is masochism more act than sexuality, or the opposite? Is this a question worth raising?

6. Weeks: Chapters 4 & 5

- What analytical value and conceptual dare does Weeks assign to "the dichotomy between sex and society"? What are the characteristics of this dichotomy? How does Weeks assess its impact on our interpretation and expression of sexuality?
- Is 'sexology' more than just a fancy term?
- Why does Weeks discuss nature in this chapter? What criteria does he suggest are helpful in assessing what is biological and what is social?
- Explain Weeks' idea of evidence. Do you think he brings to his argument profound and persuasive evidence?
- Weeks discusses Krafft-Ebbing's influence on our understanding of and reactions to sexuality. Contemplate the opposite of what Weeks says Krafft-Ebbing assumed: can we have morality without repression?

7. Phillips: Chapter 3

- Phillips begins to articulate a gender-based discussion of masochism. Explain her perspective, and prepare to discuss whether, so far, her position is conceptually compelling.
- Prepare to discuss Phillips' perception of the relationship between feminism and assumptions about masochism.
- How do you respond to Phillips' assertion that sexual pleasure is connected to behaviour [broadly defined] that is ideologically incorrect? What relationship does she suggest between pleasure and eroticism? What, if any, relationship, might you suggest among the following: passion, pleasure, sensation, culture, desire, and eroticism?
- To what extent do you think desire and fantasy are interwoven?

8. Phillips: Chapter 4

- How does this chapter explore the connections between masculinity and masochism?
- As her gender position is further elaborated here, what are Phillips' positions on male and female masochism? Do you concur with her generalizations?
- Do you accept her statement that "masochism and the imagination are almost inseparable" [page 99] as a useful analytical premise?
- What social conditions permit us to 'own up' to the varieties of our sexual desires? What conditions foster inhibition?

9. Phillips: Chapter 5

- What do you think Phillips means by "spaces of exile", "knowledge", and the relationship between them? What sources of knowledge would you identify?
- What intellectual utility does Phillips see in her references to personal culture? Is it possible for us to have personal culture? If so, how is it hinged to social culture?
- Why does Phillips consider some notions of law and order as similar to sexual fantasy?

10. Weeks: Chapters 6 & 7

- Is Weeks' chapter on sexuality and the unconscious helpful to us sociologically?
- Prepare to discuss the assertion that desire cannot represent a relationship to reality, but is linked to fantasy [page 132]
- Weeks believes Freudian ideas have had a very significant bearing on our assumptions, outlooks, and regulation of sexuality. Assuming he's right, what are these ideas, and what do you think explains their prominence in our culture?
- What would you identify in our society that is classified as dangerous desire? Is there desire not considered dangerous, that ought to be understood this way? Is there desire deemed dangerous that should be removed from that list?
- What is your response to the quote from Jacques Donzelot on page 157, that we no longer experience desire as a reach *for* something?
- Weeks writes of meanings of desire. What meanings does he refer to, and can you think of others he overlooks?
- Before reading this chapter, did you think desire and politics were culturally linked?
- After looking at Freud's work, Weeks turns first to Lacan, and then to Foucault. Which of their

ideas, and why, does Weeks mention?

12. Phillips: Chapter 6

- Do you believe that one of our social aims is to abolish suffering? If so, is such an outcome possible?
- Are we trapped in some way by our assumptions of what does and does not constitute suffering?
- What are your thoughts regarding the comment on page 147, that society's sacrifices are endured by its least protected members?
- Are risk-taking, martyrdom, and masochism indistinguishable from each other?

13. Weeks: Chapter 8

- Why does Weeks write of the paradoxes of identity? What paradoxes does he mention? Do you accept the reasoning that establishes these items as paradoxes?
- Do you accept as analytically helpful, Weeks' distinction between identity and identification? Ask the same question regarding identity and our political culture.
- What, if any, aspects of your identity are political? What, if any, aspects are sexual? Are there other areas of your life that make up the significant foundation of your identity?

14. Weeks: Chapters 9 & 10

- Do you agree with Weeks that contemporary western culture emphasizes a morality of acts, which embody sin or salvation? If so, do you think we substantially benefit or not from this emphasis? Can you imagine alternative forms of morality?
- 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?
- What are your thoughts on the quote attributed to Gloria Steinem on page 233: "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?
- Does the quote on page 238 lead you to rethink any of Phillips' ideas?
- What do you imagine Weeks had in mind with his phrase "refusing to refuse the body" [page 241]?
- What difficulties do we face in using sexual theory as an aid to sexuality?

15. Levine: Foreword, Acknowledgments, & Introduction

- Look at the second note of the Foreword 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? Does any part of it fit 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 you conceptualize risk?

16. 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, nurturance, 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?

17. 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?

18. 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?

19. Levine: Chapter 5

- What is the author saying when she refers to no-sex education?
- Is it analytically rigorous to classify the debate in terms of right and left wing sex education?

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?

20. Levine: Chapter 6

- What implications occur to you regarding the 1994 poll results mentioned on page 126?

21. Levine: Chapter 7

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

22. 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?
- How do gender and desire intersect?
- 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?

23. 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?