

SOCIOLOGY 2800
HUMAN SEXUALITY
(Fall 2011)

Grande Prairie Regional College
3 University Transfer Credits

Course Prerequisite: SO1000

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

Mode of Delivery: Class and Group Discussion, and Occasional Lectures

Instructor: Alan Segal asegal@gprc.ab.ca

Office Hours: Tuesdays: 16.15 – 17.00 Thursdays: 16.30 – 16.50
Or By Appointment

Office: C410, 539-2011

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, but to foster inquiry. How social authority affects the scope and substance of what we examine is a necessary aspect of such inquiry. No course can withstand entirely the politics of its content, however, therefore creating a capacity to offend some who enrol in it. This is especially true of a course in human sexuality. Nevertheless, SO2800 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.

Plagiarism: In an academic setting, presenting others' work as your own is a serious violation. However, referencing articles and books and online academic products do not prevent you from building on their ideas and speculations. For a more precise definition of plagiarism and its consequences, consult Page 50 of Grande Prairie Regional College's Admissions Guide.

Required Reading:

Sexuality, 2nd Edition - Joseph Bristow
The Reader - Bernhard Schlink

Assignments:

Oral Presentations (3 in Total): (F, D- to A+)

In-Class Presentations will be based on the articles I hand out. You may select one of them but no article can be the subject of more than one presentation. Our strong inclination is to offer an opinion on whether some behaviour is or is not sexually deviant, psychologically abnormal, or morally repugnant. This course however will explore the logics, theories, and sociocultural experience of sexuality, and this approach should be evident in how you discuss with your peers the specific details and implications of the article you choose. Opinions about human experience are valuable in this case only if they can be incorporated into a rigorous discussion of ideas.

Instructor-Student Conversation is the second of the 3 oral presentations required for this course. Either individually or in groups of two, we will discuss one of the articles not already selected, or some logical or theoretical questions you have about the main text or other course material. Per person, you should expect a 20-minute conversation (40 for two people), that is casual but also substantive.

Film Review Presentations can be individual or two-person presentations to the class. The mark will be assigned collectively where two individuals co-present. These Reviews will be based on films you have seen that you consider interesting and relevant to this course. Explaining the pertinence of them is one requirement, but offering us your analytical review with questions you think important to the analysis, are also obligations of the presentation.

Presentation Dates: To be decided.

Tabulating Grades:

The total Grade Points available from your assignments is 12. All marks will be totalled and divided by this number. A percentage will be derived based on this tabulation, and the percentage will be reconverted to a final grade.

NOTE: No class averaging will be done.

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 course assignments, I will use D- as an additional non-failing mark.

NOTE: Some postsecondary institutions may not accept a final grade of D and D+.

Electronic Devices: For those people who must have contact with people during class time, you may leave your cell phone on 'vibrate', and leave the room if a response from you is required. Otherwise, texting or use of phones will result in you having to miss that particular class. Please do not put me in a position of having to do this.

DISCUSSION SEQUENCE

1. Introduction to SO2800
2. The Reader, Part 1
3. The Reader, Rest of Book
4. Bristow - Introduction

Class Discussion:

For all of our reading you must be able to provide an overview of the authors' ideas and logic. Begin this approach with the Introduction. Then prepare to discuss in class the meanings of sexuality and desire, and when these reasonably intertwine, and when/if they do not. One of the themes introduced quickly is the interplay of culture, cultural change, naming, and being. We will discuss this as well, and as part of your analysis of what these might signify individually and as an inter-relation, prepare to offer examples from contemporary society in Canada and elsewhere. Bristow refers to Jeffrey Weeks and Weeks' thought that sexuality is a fictional unity. How do you interpret the meaning of Bristow's reference? Might this have any connection to signification, a point Bristow mentions when alluding to Jacques Lacan? What is signification?

5. Chapter 1

Class Discussion:

Bristow devotes a large portion of his book to the emergence and development of Sexology. Why? Early in chapter 1 he critiques the self-help books and articles on sexuality. How does his critique fit so far with his analytical framework for this book? On page 22 Bristow offers a statement about the hazards of language. We will discuss this in class and give it a contemporary hue by looking at contemporary language. Remember as you do this, however, that language has multiple meanings. For instance, language is also discourse. Think about Bristow's treatment so far of Michel Foucault's work. In light of the previous few sentences, do you associate desire with eroticism? Which of our contemporary vocabularies would you associate with desire? What are the feminist contentions cited in the chapter? Do you think women under 30 would identify with these?

6. Lecture: The Body

7. Chapter 2 (To the end of the quote on page 66. Pages 76-84. Pages 89-104)

Class Discussion:

Bristow believes that knowing and understanding theories of psychoanalytic drives is vital to analyses of sexuality. From a sociological perspective, do you share his outlook? What content makes up a psychoanalytic drive? What logics underlie it, and how do the different concepts presented in the chapter, move the PD in different directions? In his discussion of Jacques Lacan, Bristow comes back repeatedly to 'The Subject'. Who or what is the subject? Also, through Lacan, Bristow seems to interweave ideas of human predicament. How are predicament and sexuality linked, from a Lacanian analysis, and your own? Some feminist theorists have criticized psychoanalytic assumptions. Detail the substance of their objections. Some feminist theorists have endorsed the conceptual power of the same assumptions. Prepare to conduct the intellectual debate between these groups.

8. Lecture on Ian Hacking's Views of Constructing Social Categories of People

Class Discussion:

What is a paradigm? How does it apply to culture and norms, and what is its relevance to a discussion of sexuality? Do these concepts coincide well with Foucault's analyses?

9. Chapter 3

Class Discussion:

On behalf of the author, explain the title of this chapter. What are libidinal economies and why highlight it as a title? Freud inaugurated the phrase 'the pleasure principle'. He intended it as a psychoanalytic concept; does it possess it sociological merit as well? How does pornography fit into a libidinal economy? Following our attention to this chapter, I will lecture on pornography. Think about the analytics of porn, because we will discuss them more intensely as we proceed through that lecture.

11. Lecture: Pornography

12. Lecture: Queer Theory

12. Chapter 4

Class Discussion:

Bristow associates Foucault with queer theory. Others, as you know, have been significant in the articulation and

critique of QT, but Bristow alleges it was facilitated significantly by Foucault's writings. Explain this significance from Bristow's position. Has your analysis of sexuality or desire altered as an outcome of reading about Foucault, or about queer theory? The last portion of the quotation from Foucault, at the top of page 159, raises a question about the relationship I'm inquiring about. What are the "relations of force" Foucault alludes to? In the manner of his connection social phenomena, an example of which is sexuality, has he persuaded you of the legitimacy of his logic? From the lecture on The Body, and what you now comprehend of Foucault's ideas, prepare an explanation of docile bodies. And also an analytical assessment of the critiques of Foucault mentioned by Bristow. Eve Sedgwick, in her early writing, enunciates an epistemology of the closet. How does this inform our overall insight into sexuality, desire, power, etc.?