



# DEPARTMENT OF ARTS AND EDUCATION

## COURSE OUTLINE – FALL 2013

# SO2800 HUMAN SEXUALITY

**INSTRUCTOR:** Alan Segal

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**OFFICE HOURS:** Mondays and Tuesdays 16:30 - 17.15. Or by appointment.

**PREREQUISITE(S)/CO-REQUISITE:** SO1000

**REQUIRED TEXT/RESOURCE MATERIALS:**

New Sexuality Studies, Second Edition - Edited by Steven Seidman, Nancy Fischer, and Chet Meeks

**CALENDAR DESCRIPTION:** An inquiry into ideas and behaviour of sexuality, and their personal, cultural, and societal implications.

**CREDIT/CONTACT HOURS:** 3 Credits / 3 Hours Per Week

**DELIVERY MODE(S):** Class and Group Discussion, Lectures, Film Analyses

**NOTE:** This course will examine a wide scan of sexual thought, philosophy, fantasy, portrayal, cultural viewpoints and personal understanding, and general behaviour. This approach indicates 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. We 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.

#### GRADING CRITERIA:

**Transferability Note:** Grades of 'D' or 'D+' may not be acceptable for transfer to other post-secondary institutions. Students must be aware it is their responsibility to contact receiving institutions to ensure transferability.

GRADING CONVERSION CHART			
Alpha Grade	4-point Equivalent	Percentage Guidelines	Designation
A+	4.0	95 – 100	EXCELLENT
A	4.0	90 – 94	
A-	3.7	87 – 89	FIRST CLASS STANDING
B+	3.3	83 – 86	
B	3.0	80 – 82	GOOD
B-	2.7	77 – 79	
C+	2.3	73 – 76	SATISFACTORY
C	2.0	65 – 72	
C-	1.7	60 – 64	
D+	1.3	55 – 59	MINIMAL PASS
D	1.0	50 – 54	
F	0.0	0 – 49	FAIL
WF	0.0	0	FAIL, withdrawal after the deadline

**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.

## **EVALUATION:**

Academic assignments for this course emphasize synthesis of ideas from a sociological standpoint, and the best questions you can think of to advance that synthesis. Analysis does not mean just reporting what others have said on a topic. Important as this is, other authors' ideas or conclusions are valuable because they add insight or specific details that help you to ask questions about the topic you have selected. My assignments are a philosophical inquiry that is advanced through your and others' investigations. Deciding what questions are worth raising is an important part of analysis. Conclusions can be valuable but aren't obligatory for any of my assignments.

### *Tabulating Grades:*

All of your assignments will receive a letter mark. At the end of the course I will add the Total Grade Points you have received based on the letter-grades your assignments have received. The grid above shows you the Grade Point Value for each letter. Maximum Grade Points available from all your assignments for this course is 12.6. Attaining a Grade Point Total of 12.6 is the same achievement as receiving 100%. When I have your Total Grade Point I will divide it by 12.6. A percentage will be derived based on this calculation, and the percentage will be reconverted to a final grade according to the grid above.

### ***First Essay Assignment - Essay (F, D- to A+) (4 Points Out of 12.6 = 32%)***

Due Date: October 9<sup>th</sup> Minimum Length: 1200 words

Select any of the articles in the main text that are not assigned for class discussion. Write a commentary on the sociological, and theoretical or philosophical implications of the material in that article. No research or referencing is necessary. However, be aware that 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 explores the types of logic, theories, and sociocultural experiences of sexuality, and this should be evident in how you address the specific details and implications of the article you choose. When reading it may be easier for us to identify bits of a published piece rather than understand its overall purpose and how successfully it communicated this purpose. Aim for comprehension on both levels. Opinions are valuable in this case only if they can be incorporated into a rigorous discussion of ideas

### ***Two Journals (F, C- to C+) (Maximum 4.6 Grade Points Out Of 12.6 = 36%)***

Due Dates: First class of October and of November. Minimum Length: 350 words

Anything pertaining to sociological observation of and insight into sexuality, class discussions or lectures, class interaction, personal life, that is relevant to this course, is a suitable topic. No research is expected.

### ***Final Assignment – Essay or Project (F, D- to A+) (4 Points Out of 12.6 = 32%)***

Due Date: December 2<sup>nd</sup> Minimum Length: 1500 words

Projects must be accompanied by an essay of at least 1000 words and have 4 sources instead of 6, only one of which can be not academic.

Any topic relevant to a sociological analysis of sexuality may be chosen. This might address a proposed change in law or policy; you might detect a gap between what we are taught about sexuality and what our culture demands of us sexually, and want to investigate this; perhaps you have traveled to another society and became intrigued by cross-cultural similarities or differences, and you want to follow the intrigue further. For all the possibilities critical analysis is emphasized here, using your own and others' ideas. Do not write just a descriptive or summarizing report. Explain why these ideas perplex and/or persuade you. Setting up your essay as a debate can help you structure this assignment because it can clarify questions that will help you probe the topic. Research beyond the assigned book is required. While your own thinking is very important, research is valuable because it draws your thought away from speculation or unjustified assertion. Various sources may present helpful evidence, but not all sources offer similarly powerful material or insight. For example, survey texts are not in themselves sufficient for this assignment. In all you must utilize a minimum of 6 sources, but three can be non-academic. This means they don't have to be assessed by reviewers from a particular academic discipline.

Contrary to what is common practise, you must reference more than just quotations. Other authors' interpretations, analyses, perceptions, or ideas, deserve credit in your papers. Mentioning them does not disqualify your view of their analyses. Using first-person words like 'I' is acceptable but remember that this essay paper is not to be an opinion piece. It is not a long journal.

Alternatives to this essay format are available. I have called them projects but they cover a range of possibilities. In the past people have written short stories or a collection of poems; or created something of an artistic nature, such as sculptures, paintings, etc. One individual created a short film, another person a choreographed dance. Projects must be accompanied by a written component, but not one as minimally long as an essay. One thousand words is the expected minimum but you have to use the same minimum number of sources with the same academic minimum. The written portion will explain what is sociological about your project.

**\* Projects are also evaluated by other faculty appropriate to the kind of work you submit to me. Therefore I must know of your plan before you proceed with it.**

**\*\* References must appear in the written portion 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 referencing must be consistent with MLA style. Remember that not all disciplines accept the same approach to writing up a reference.**

**\*\*GRADES WILL BE REDUCED BY ONE LETTER GRADE IF THE ASSIGNMENT IS LESS THAN MINIMUM LENGTH.**

**\*\*GRAMMAR IS IMPORTANT FOR PRECISE COMMUNICATION. WHILE NOT VALUED AS HIGHLY AS CONTENT, POOR GRAMMAR CAN AFFECT YOUR MARK FOR THE ASSIGNMENT.**

**\*\*\*ALL WRITTEN/PROJECT ASSIGNMENTS EXCEPT THE JOURNALS ARE SUBJECT TO LATENESS PENALTIES OF ONE GRADE LEVEL PER CALENDAR DAY BEYOND THE DUE DATE. JOURNALS WILL BE REDUCED BY ONE GRADE LEVEL FOR EACH TWO-DAY LATENESS PERIOD.**

**\*\*\*\*ALL WRITTEN ASSIGNMENTS MUST BE SENT BY EMAIL, TO MY COLLEGE ACCOUNT:**

**[asegal@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:asegal@gprc.ab.ca) YOU MUST INCLUDE THE WORD 'ASSIGNMENT' IN THE SUBJECT LINE. AND INDICATE YOUR NAME, COURSE NUMBER (AND SECTION IF I AM TEACHING MORE THAN ONE SECTION OF THE COURSE), AND WHICH ASSIGNMENT IT IS.**

***Discussion Bonus: (A, B, C, D)***

Every person in the course may (but not necessarily will), receive a bonus mark based on a combination of the frequency and quality of the participation. Discussion postings to a Moodle discussion forum also will be considered class participation. You will be eligible for a bonus mark only if you display commitment to the course by reading the books and completing all written assignments. Although attendance is not relevant to the regular assignments for the course, it is important to your eligibility for a bonus mark. The bonus mark offers an A, B, C, or D. No plus or minus signs will be used. If you receive a bonus mark, it will be added to your overall grade total prior to working out a final mark. Eligibility for the bonus is nullified if you are absent for more than 4 classes. The bonus will not result in more than a 3-level rise in final grades.

**STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIES:**

University courses provide the best intellectual and perhaps social experience, when students arrive prepared for the day's work. My classes are heavily discussion -oriented and therefore require commitment from students.

1. Read assignments.
2. Participate in class conversation about the material.
3. Complete all written work.
4. Indicate on submitted material your name; section and course number; and which assignment is being sent to me.
5. **All written work must be sent via email to [asegal@gprc.ab.ca](mailto:asegal@gprc.ab.ca) You MUST use the word 'assignment' in the subject line.**
6. **Electronic Devices: People who must have contact with others during class time may leave their cell phones on 'vibrate', and leave the room if a response 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.**

**STATEMENT ON PLAGIARISM AND CHEATING:**

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, refer to the Student Conduct

section of the College Admission Guide at <http://www.gprc.ab.ca/programs/calendar/> or the College Policy on Student Misconduct: Plagiarism and Cheating at [www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/](http://www.gprc.ab.ca/about/administration/policies/)\*\*

**\*\*Note:** all Academic and Administrative policies are available on the same page.

## **COURSE SCHEDULE/TENTATIVE TIMELINE:**

1. *Introduction to course*
2. *General Introduction; Part 1 Introduction; Chapter 1 - Theoretical Perspectives; Chapter 2 - The Social Construction of Sexuality; Chapter 4 - Popular Culture Constructs Sexuality*

### **Class Discussion:**

These sections set up a framework for the rest of the course text. As diverse as the selections are, they gravitate to debates and analyses around views of sexuality as natural, that compete with views of sexuality as constructed. Prepare to discuss the fault lines of this contention. What is meant by 'natural', and what do you think sociologists imagine when they allege social construction is the most profound aspect of societal experience? Do our understandings of identity, and of what is factual, fall into this ongoing conflict? Given the early entries on this topic, why was it important to the editors of the book to include a chapter on popular culture?

When an author opens a volume with a chapter on theory, we can assume only those theorists deemed most significant to our best awareness are likely to be mentioned. Which theorists does Seidman introduce, and how does he justify their selection? Be ready to discuss the particular theories of the people presented in the chapter.

3. *Part 2 Introduction; Chapter 8 - Sexual Politics in Intimate Relationships*

### **Class Discussion:**

From both popular-culture and theoretical standpoints, how might power factor in with sex? When we speak of sex and sexuality, are we alluding to the same phenomena? Sexual expression can often be publicly demonstrated, but personal relationships and intimacy in our society can be associated with privacy. Assuming this, ought we to be surprised by the coupling of 'intimate relationships' with 'sexual politics'? Identify the politics of intimacy; would you add or remove from consideration, these or other politics?

4. *Lecture - The Body; Part 3 Introduction; Chapter 10 - Medicine and the Making of a Sexual Body; Chapter 11 - The Body, Disability, and Sexuality*

Class Discussion:

Apply the ideas of discourse, epistemology, commodification, consumption, inscription, transgression, and representation to each of the chapters listed above. What is a paradigm? How might we use the concept when analyzing sexual culture, norms, and the body? Identify assumptions that support making bodies, and those that challenge that such are created.

5. *Lecture - Queer Theory*

6. *Chapter 28 - Romantic Love; Chapter 30 - Shopping For Love*

Class Discussion:

Does romance actually exist? How do we define 'evidence', and is it adequate to the challenge of finding it in support or contradiction of, romance? Does it matter to us if romance is mainly a cultural construct? Could we conclude that sociologically speaking, a society has romance but no romantic affinities, mentalities, or experiences? We have not yet come to a discussion of economy, capitalism, and sexuality, but so far in your readings and thought, are these implicit in our conceptualization of, or our actual acting on, ideas and ideals of romance?

Could we comprehend love without romance? What kind of love or romance would be the result? Does shopping for love hint at such an outcome? The chapter contains one segment on the normalization of internet dating. Could this be an illustration of a fracturing of love and romance?

7. *Part 6 Introduction; Chapter 36 - Sexual Narratives of 'Straight' Women; Chapter 38 - The Disappearance of the Homosexual; Chapter 42 - Multiple Identities....*

Class Discussion:

How would you explain what an identity is, to someone who had no notion of it? Why would the editors of this book include a chapter on narrative in the section focusing on identity? On the first page of chapter 36 there is the heading 'the trouble with sexual identity'. What is troublesome or troubling about this? Is it troubling in the sense of a disappearance of the homosexual? Does Bech perceive this as a problem? What exactly is disappearing? When you say to yourself or another person, "I have an identity", what do you mean? And would you mean that you have only one? If our lives are characterized by multiple identities, does this also indicate we are fragmented beings? Which ones are discussed in the book, and what is the author's point in bringing them to our attention?

8. *Lecture - Pornography; Chapter 45 - The Political Economy of Sexual Labor*

Class Discussion:

Prior to your enrolment in this course, did you think our economy was connected to sexuality? If so, did you phrase it as a political economy? What is a political economy? Are some forms of sex work not classifiable as sexual labour? How would pornography's connection to the political economy be theorized by the theorists presented in the lecture?

9. *Part 8 Introduction; Part 9 Introduction; Chapter 51 - Sexual Liberation and the Creative Class in Israel; Chapter 57 - Sexuality, State, and Nation*

Class Discussion:

In the conversations you have been part of, or overheard, in your lifetimes, in which culture was the topic being discussed, how often did people allude to sexual cultures? Does the analysis of the 'creative' class in Israel crystallize the meaning(s) of a sexual culture? Aren't we all members of a culture anyway, and if so, how could we be external to a sexual culture regardless of how creative we are? How tied together are sexual cultures, with the state and the nation? Are the last two items distinct from each other?

10. *Chapter 58 - Iran's Sexual Revolution; Chapter 70 - A Post-Identity Culture of Sexual Resistance: The Case Lebanese Non-Heterosexuals; Chapter 71 - War and the Politics of Sexual Violence*

Class Discussion:

Is it too great a stretch to consider together, Iran's post-1979 revolution, and the post-identity culture mentioned by Seidman? Does the sexual revolution presented in the article on Iran coincide with the political revolution the country experienced? What does 'post-identity' refer to, and why would this lead to resistance in Lebanon? Do the perspectives articulated in chapter 71 apply at all to the other chapters of readings in this grouping?

11. *Chapter 75 - The Public and Hidden Sexualities of Filipina Women in Lebanon; Chapter 76 - Mexican Immigrants, Heterosexual Sex and Loving Relationships in the United States*