

MAY 24 2000

SOCIOLOGY 2800

Grande Prairie Regional College

HUMAN SEXUALITY

(INTERSESSION 2000)

Course Description:

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

Instructor: Alan Segal

Office: C410, 539-2011

Office Hours: Mondays - Thursdays, after class

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 Co-requisite/Prerequisite: SOCIOLOGY 1000

CREED AND CAUTION: This course will examine a wide scan of sexual thought, fantasy, portrayal, understandings, considerations, and general behaviour. Its approach assumes that in a mature society no question is beyond scrutiny. No course can withstand entirely the social 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, however, how in any society particular forms of sexuality become "normal" and others "abnormal," and whether such a distinction helps or hinders us. Feature films and documentaries, and magazines, will be shown occasionally 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 substantially offensive, you should reconsider remaining in it.

Required Reading:

What's love got to do with it? The evolution of human mating - Meredith Small

Buddy's: Meditations on desire - Stan Persky

Blue Politics: Pornography and the law in the age of feminism - Dany Lacombe

Assignments:

Major Assignment

- One class Presentation, by yourself or in conjunction with a maximum of two other people.
- Topics must investigate some dimension of sexuality.
- Presentations, depending on the topic, must give us a background for understanding the area, so that as a class we may discuss it. You must also help us probe some important questions about the topic. Merely reporting on it or describing it is **not** the goal of the assignment.
- Substance of thought, presentation style, and how you lead or respond to class interaction are all relevant to grade you will receive.
- All presentations will be marked on a 1-9 stanine grid. However, each of you will assess each presenter/presentation. You will use a 1-4 grid. I will add your total to my own evaluation, so that

each presentation in effect will be worth a maximum of 13 stanines.

2 Journals

- Due May 8 and 15
- Each is worth a maximum of 2 stanines. **However, a benchmark of 1 will apply to all journals.**
- Each journal is to be one typewritten page or two handwritten pages
- 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 have a range of 1-3.

Tabulating Grades

The total of all stanine marks available for assignments is 19. Your marks will be totaled out of 15, 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	72 - 79
6	65 - 71
5	57 - 64
4	50 - 56
3	45 - 49

2	26 - 44
1	0 - 25

NOTE: No class averaging will be done.

DISCUSSION SEQUENCE

Introduction to course

1. General and Sociological
2. Historical background

Biological Eternity, Anthropological Possibility

3. What's love got to do with it? Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2

From what framework does Small approach her analysis? What types of questions interests her?
 What fundamental concepts form the core of the book?
 Are humans meant to be monogamous? Of what cultural and social importance is this question?
 Does libido have a logic? If so, how might we analyze it sociologically?
 When we claim to have sexual selves, what are we referring to?

4. Same book: Chapters 3 - 5

Explain your understanding of communication. Does this understanding change if we refer to sexual communication?
 Is all thought ethical? What sexual decisions, if any, are irrelevant to ethics? What ethical stances would be favoured, do you think, by sociological advocates of interactionism, functionalism, structural functionalism, and different branches of feminism?
 If you think of the possibility of having a mate, what influences can you identify in your life that

impact your thinking? How do you explain attractiveness? What characteristics in another person elicit from you the strongest response?

5. Same book: Chapters 6 & 7

Do you agree with Small's assertion that we search for causes of homosexuality because of our discomfort with our own sexual selves?

If we are to define particular sexualities, what criteria do you suggest are most apt?

What sexual possibilities do you foresee in the future?

Sexual Inventions, Sexual Representations

7. Buddy's: Pages 3-162

What is beauty? Do you agree with Persky's ideas and observations about beauty?

How might we explain what a sexual body is? How is the very concept of a sexual body sociologically influenced?

Persky writes of the power and impact of signs. Do you see a connection between the sexual body and the signs of our environment?

What is the relationship between appearance and disappearance - and between appearance and reality? Is any of this wrapped up with enticement, allure, repulsion, etcetera?

In what sense are communication and portrayal harmonious and disharmonious?

8. Buddy's: Pages 65-92

What is discourse?

Why mention God in a book on desire?

Prepare to discuss how desire and commodification intertwine.

Are fantasies reliable indicators of our "real" desires? Do you think that fantasies and desires differ according to gender?

Are bars and pubs the same thing? If you go to bars, do you consider any of them to be the embodiment of myth?

Is it reasonable to speak of what Persky calls the etymology of one's own sexuality, rather than the social construction of categorical sexualities? [bottom of page 75]

Think back to our earlier discussion of desire, and ask yourself if you conceptualize desire in the manner expressed on page 79. How much is our desire intensified by what we are not, or by what we think we are not?

Without signing it if you prefer not to, write a personal ad for yourself.

9. Buddy's: pages 93-134

What is ideology? What ideology[ies] of sex can you identify in our society? Is there an ideology of sexual danger?

What meaning does Persky give to pornography?

Is love an illusion? Is it what George indicates on page 129?

Sexual Ventures, Sexual Control

10. Blue Politics: Chapters 1 - 3

What perspectives of obscenity are considered by Lacombe? Are you persuaded by some feminist positions on what is causality and harm? Should we distinguish between rationales and rational explanations?

11. BP: Chapters 4 - 6

If you were asked to write an anti-obscenity law, what would be its most important concept[s]?

12. BP: Chapter 7 & Epilogue

13. Course Wrap-up:

Can notions of normalcy, and the power exerted to enforce it, stand up to the range of sexual identities, sentiments, and expressions? What kind of sexuality education would we have if you were asked to establish such a program? What principles would frame your "curriculum?"