

SOCIOLOGY 2800
Grande Prairie Regional College

HUMAN SEXUALITY

(Winter 1997)

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/Wednesdays: 2 - 3pm
Tuesdays/Wednesdays: 6 - 6:25pm
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 Co-/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 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, however, how in any society particular forms of sexuality become "normal" and others "abnormal," and whether such a distinction helps or

hinders us sexually. 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:

Sexuality and gender in society - James Carroll and Paul Wolpe

The regulation of desire - Gary Kinsman

Threatened children - Joel Best

Assignments:

Major Assignment - due _____

(Marked on a 1-9 scale; there is a lateness penalty of a 1/2 stanine per day if you write an essay)

3 Journals

(Journals are due the first classes of February, March, and April. Each is worth a maximum of 1 stanine; details below)

Self-evaluation

(Marked on a 1-3 scale; due the last class of the semester; details below)

The total of all stanine marks available for assignments is 15. Your marks will be totaled out of 15, a percentage will be obtained, and the percentage will be re-converted 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: BONUS possibility: Because class discussion is a vital aspect of this course, you 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.

SELF-EVALUATION

This part of your overall grade asks you to assess your general contribution to the course. Explain your reasons when you hand in the evaluation.

Marks are generally accepted without question if you:

1. Complete all assignments.
2. Cite valid, accurate reasons to support your mark.

Major Assignment

This can be on any topic that interests you, even one not addressed in class discussions or lectures, providing it is relevant to the course. If you choose to write an essay, do not write a descriptive report. The essay must be an analytical exploration about the ideas you express. If you write an essay additional research is expected (for example books, articles, newspapers, journals). Be precise; reason rather than merely express opinion, and be grammatical. Grammatical mistakes may affect your mark. The required length is 3000 words. Your essay can, however, surpass the word limit. Include a "Works Cited" section. Your mark will be reduced by a half-stanine for inadequate length. Type and double-space the essay unless you prefer that I record my comments on audio tape. You may single-space the paper if you don't want written comments. All disks or hard copies must clearly stipulate your name, ID number, date of submission of the essay, and the title of the essay.

If your essay is late a half-stanine penalty per day will be in effect, including weekends. If you hand in your assignment late, have another faculty member or a regular employee of the College sign and date it. In-text referencing and a "Works Cited" section are required, and all documentation must be in the MLA style. Should either reference section be omitted, your assignment will be reduced by 1 stanine per section. If a style other than MLA is used, for each kind of referencing not in the MLA style there may be a reduction of 1/2 stanine.

If you opt for a different kind of major assignment, for example a fine arts project, critical thinking must still be evident. Consult with me about how this might be done.

Journals

Each journal is usually one page. 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.

What is Critical Thinking?

Critical thinking is intellectually disciplined thinking, based on skeptical, careful, and logical analysis of evidence. Take nothing for granted and challenge universal truths or explanations. Defer dis/agreement until a later stage of analysis [or at least do not allow it to guide your analysis], and consider alternative understandings, explanations, and ideas. Critical thought is independent and autonomous.

Uncritical thought is conforming, dogmatic, and closed-minded. Uncritical thinkers do not strive for greater understanding or awareness beyond what they already possess.

Critical thinking is facilitated by knowledge of a discipline or subject, skills for generating and processing ideas, and a disposition or habit of mind to use the skills consistently. Reflective teachers are knowledgeable people who think deeply and openly about what, who, and how they teach, and the circumstances in which they teach.

Critical Thinking Objectives

1. Identify and clearly articulate problems and issues
2. Identify arguments:

Premises (beliefs, assumptions, evidence),
inferences, and conclusions

Distinguish between evidence and conclusions
based on that evidence

3. Evaluate arguments:

Question the accuracy of assumptions in arguments and practices

Assess the quality of the evidence

Evaluate the validity of an inference or argument

Identify implications and consequences of beliefs, assumptions, and conclusions

4. Construct and communicate sound arguments orally and in writing

A Critical Thinker's Vocabulary

Argument: Reasons given for or against something. A line of reasoning in which statements are presented to support or refute a point.

Assumption: A statement accepted as true without proof or demonstration [or without immediately obvious proof or demonstration]. An unstated belief or premise, something taken for granted.

Conclusion: A judgment, decision, or proposition reached by reasoning.

Evidence: The data, facts, information, or understandings on which conclusions are based, or by which proof or reliability may be established. Standards for evidence include accuracy, relevance, and completeness.

Inference: The reasoning or logical thinking associated with understanding evidence and assumptions, and through which one forms conclusions.

Premise: A statement from which something is inferred or concluded. A statement on which an argument is based.

DISCUSSION SEQUENCE

1. Introduction to course: A Sociological Approach to Understanding Sexuality

2. Investigating and Understanding Sexuality:

Chapter 2 - Sexuality and gender...

Introduction, Chapters 1 & 2 - Regulation of desire

3. Sexual Cultures and the Culture of Sexuality:

Chapter 1 - Sexuality & gender...

The Regulation of Desire, the rest of the book

4. Gender:

Chapter 4 (page 121-127); Chapter 5 - Sexuality and gender...

What is gender/gender identity? What is identity/sexual identity?

5. Fantasy/Desire:

Special Focus 6 - Sexuality and gender...

Are fantasies reliable indicators of our "real" desires? Do you think that fantasies and desires differ according to gender? Do other factors in human experience influence desire, fantasy, and our awareness/understanding of them? How might different schools of sociological thought explain fantasy and desire?

6. Sexual Bodies, Sexual Representation:

Special Foci 3 - 5; Sexuality and gender...

How is the very concept of a sexual body sociologically influenced? How might different sociological schools of thought explain both the fact of representation, and the experience(s) that come from it?

Sports, bodies, and representations - lecture by Ray Kardas

7. The Sexuality of Sexualities:

Chapters 7, 12, 14, & 15 - Sexuality and gender...

Threatened Children, the entire book

Can notions of normalcy, and the power exerted to enforce it, stand up to the range of sexual identities, sentiments, and expressions? Must they exist despite what Kinsman has to say about constructing sexuality? Do his ideas intersect at all with Best's thesis in "Threatened children?"

8. Communication:

Chapters 6, 8, 9 - Sexuality and gender...

Explain your understanding of "communication." Does this understanding change if we refer to sexual communication?

9. Sexual Ethics:

Special Focus 1, Sexuality and gender...

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?

10. Sexuality Education and Educating the Sexual:

Special Focus 2 - Sexuality and gender...

What kind of sexuality education would we have if you were asked to establish such a program? What principles would frame your "curriculum?"