

FEB 22 2000

SOCIOLOGY 2800

Grande Prairie  
Regional College

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**HUMAN SEXUALITY**

(Winter 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/Wednesdays 2:30 - 3:30pm  
Tues/Thursdays u

**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

- Due the last class of the semester.
- Marked on a 1-9 scale
- If your assignment is late, a 1-stamine penalty per day will be applied, including weekends.
- If you do hand in the assignment late, or on the due date, but at a time when I do not seem to be 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.
- Critically analyze the topic, using your own and others' ideas. You must utilize sociological thought in some form or other. Do not write a descriptive report; think about the ideas you express. Try to explain why these ideas persuade you.
- Research is required. Although your own thinking is the most important requirement, research can

be valuable.

- You may use first person words like 'I', but the paper is not a large opinion piece. It's meant to be a concise analytical statement, based on thought and ideas, not quickly-generated opinions.
- The length of each essay will be 1500 words. Your mark will be reduced by a half-stanine for inadequate or excessive length. All papers must be typed and double-spaced.
- All work must clearly stipulate your name, ID number, and course and section numbers.
- Grammar is important to communicating precise meaning. Grammar will not be valued as highly as content, but it will be evaluated.
- If you hand in the essay early I will comment fully on it, and you will be eligible to rewrite the paper.
- You must include a "Works Cited" section and referencing in the text. Anything that comes from another author's work must be referenced, not just quotes.
- Should either reference section be omitted, your assignment will be reduced by 1 stanine per section.
- All documentation must be in MLA style.
- All assignments must be stapled.
- **You can choose a different kind of major assignment, for example a fine arts project or a class presentation. Critical thinking must still be evident. Consult with me about how this might be done.**

### 3 Journals

- Due the first classes of February, March, and April.
- 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 15. 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

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: Chapter 6

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?

6. Same book: Chapter 7

What sexual possibilities do you foresee in the future?

### **Sexual Inventions, Sexual Representations**

7. Buddy's: Pages 3-15

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

8. Buddy's. Pages 16-62

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?

9. 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.

10. 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**

11. Blue Politics, Chapters 1 - 3

Are you persuaded by some feminist positions on what is causality and harm? Should we distinguish between rationales and rational explanations?

12. BP, Chapters 4 - 6

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

21. BP, Chapter 7 & Epilogue

22. 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?"