Course Description

This course introduces you to basic tools and concepts in the sociological study of sexuality. We start with the assumption that humans are sexual beings and that our histories, cultures, genders, races, classes, and other social factors shape our sexualities. Our broad goal for the semester is to understand how social factors influence the ways we think about and experience sexual desire, behaviors, and identities. We will investigate how norms regarding sexuality are rooted in structures of power and how power is negotiated within the realm of sexuality. The course is divided into four sections, each of which is grounded in systematic empirical studies and examples. First, we ask what sexuality is and how it is studied and measured by social scientists. Second, we consider the ways social ideologies and social structures shape our ideas about sex, sexuality, and sexual bodies. Third, we explore how people develop senses of themselves sexually as individuals and in communities. Finally, we examine sexuality in the broader context of social institutions, including education, law and social policy, medicine, and the media.

Success in this four-credit course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, research, etc.).

Learning Goals

By the conclusion of this course students will:

- Be familiar with a range of ways of thinking about and conceptualizing sexuality
- Be familiar with the assumptions underlying different theoretical approaches to the study of sexuality
- Be able to articulate, verbally and in writing, how researchers in the United States have tried to measure aspects of sexuality and what the strengths and weaknesses are of their approaches
- Understand how (and why) people’s assumptions and ways of learning about sex and sexuality have changed over time in the United States
- Be able to describe verbally and in writing how people learn about sex and sexuality and provide an example of a tool that might help in these processes
- Be able to articulate how different communities shape people experiences of sex and sexuality
• Have had the opportunity to reflect on how the materials covered in this class relate to the ways broader groups students are a part of (families, friends, campus organizations, etc) think and talk about sex and sexuality

Course Materials

The following books are available in the university bookstore:


Other required readings are available through LATTE or online

Course Requirements

1. **Attendance is required.** Class will begin promptly at 3:30 p.m. Please be on time out. Your class attendance counts as 5 points towards your final grade. If you miss zero or one class, you will receive 5 points. If you miss 2 classes, you will receive 4 points. If you miss 3 classes, you will receive 3 points. If you miss 4 classes, you will receive 2 points. If you miss 5 classes, you will receive 1 point. If you miss more than 5 classes, you will receive 0 points. The only absences that will not influence your grade are those for religious holidays that you email me about at least one week in advance. If you are too ill to attend class, I will excuse the absence only with a note from your doctor or the Health Center.

2. **Reading is required.** All course readings must be done before coming to class each week.

   **Reading Response Assignment.** Over the course of the semester, you are expected submit at least 5 short (two paragraph) reading responses to LATTE. These responses must be posted to LATTE by 5 p.m. on the Monday before the week we are scheduled to discuss those readings in class. You are encouraged to make connections between course readings and class discussions. Each response should pose a discussion question that we may use to explore the readings in class. You should refer to at least two books or articles assigned for that week. Your paper needs to make clear that you read the material and grasped the central arguments (not that you just pulled a quote out of the first few pages of the reading and are reflecting on it in light of your personal experiences!). If you submit each of these 5 entries on time as outlined, you will receive the full 15 points. You will 3 lose points for each entry you do not complete thoroughly and on time. I will only accept responses that are posted to LATTE by 5 p.m. on Monday (for responses to readings due Tuesday or Thursday of that week). All responses must be posted to the appropriate forum. Late responses cannot be
accepted: You cannot turn in responses via email, in class, or after class is over. Please plan now for which class sessions you plan to submit a response, so you are not caught by surprise at the end of the semester.

3. Class participation is required. This is not a lecture class but primarily a discussion seminar based on your careful reading and preparation for class. To that end, I expect everyone to participate actively in class discussion and to work together to create an environment where everyone can safely and comfortably express their views. We will develop discussion guidelines together early in the semester. You can earn up to 10 points for participating in class discussions over the course of the semester.

Discussion Facilitation Assignment. Each student will also work with someone else in the class to co-facilitate part of a class discussion at least once during the semester (as part of meeting the oral communication requirements of the class). You can earn up to 10 points for facilitating class discussion. Facilitation assignments will be made during the second week of classes.

Your goal in facilitating class discussion is to find a way to talk about the required reading that engages everyone, applies the ideas to their lives, is fun, and is comfortable. You can focus on particular discussion questions you put together, create games or exercises around key themes, read parts of texts out loud in class (or act them out), show film clips that illustrate central themes and might help students apply the ideas… be creative! You are encouraged to find ways to apply what we are learning to your life and the lives of your classmates in a way that makes this material real, relevant and worth reading! You should plan for your facilitation to take between 45 minutes and one hour.

* Please remember that members of this class are straight, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, not sure... transgender, genderless, women and men... We are racially, ethnically, religiously, politically, culturally, and economically diverse. We are all in the process of learning, developing, and becoming, and as a class we want to respect and honor those processes. We can do this by listening carefully to each other, making an effort to include everyone, letting each other try out ideas we are not certain about, disagreeing respectfully, and striving to discuss gender and sexuality in as mature a manner as possible. Sexuality is both highly personal and highly politicized - the reason why many of us were taught not to discuss it at the dinner table! Some of what we read and discuss will likely make you uncomfortable. I ask you to be patient, to reserve judgment, and to remember the commitment Brandeis makes in its mission statement to be “a center of open inquiry and teaching.”

4. Written Assignments and Presentations. In addition to the writing described under point 2 above, you will complete two 5-7-page papers. The second paper will accompany the in-class presentation each student will construct for the second to last week of class. I will distribute detailed instructions for each assignment well in advance of the deadline.

   a. This first paper is due on October 13
b. The second paper is due on the last day of class, and presentations are scheduled for December 1 and December 3.

Each paper is worth 25 points. The oral presentation on the second paper is worth 10 additional points. You will lose one full letter grade (2 points) for each 24 hours after the due date the assignment is turned in (i.e. if you would have received an 18 but your paper is turned in within the first 24 hours after it is due, you will receive a 16, etc.). I expect you to properly cite and reference any articles you refer to when completing your paper.

If you have any questions at any point, please do not hesitate to ask. You are encouraged to visit the Writing Center for additional support and guidance. (http://www.brandeis.edu/programs/writing/writingcenter/index.html)

All written work must be completed to receive a passing grade in this class

Final grades will be calculated using the following point distribution

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Communications:
The best way to contact me is using e-mail: lsmollin@brandeis.edu. I typically respond to e-mail within 48 hours. If you do not receive a response within this time frame, please check the address and resend your message. Any announcements regarding changes to the course plan, or emergencies that may require the rescheduling of class will be made through LATTE. If there are any changes to the course plan, I will also make an announcement in class.

University Policy on Academic Accommodations:
If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have a reasonable accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately. More information about policy and procedures relating to academic accommodations can be found at http://www.brandeis.edu/acserv/disabilities/undergradstudents.html.

University Policy on Academic Integrity:
You are expected to be honest in all of your academic work. Please consult Brandeis University Rights and Responsibilities (http://www.brandeis.edu/studentlife/srsc/rr/) for all policies and procedures related to academic integrity. Students may be required to submit some work to TurnItIn.com software to verify originality. Allegations of alleged academic dishonesty will be forwarded to the Director of Academic Integrity. Sanctions for academic dishonesty can include failing grades and/or suspension from the university. Citation and research assistance can be found at LTS - Library guides (http://guides.library.brandeis.edu/c.php?g=301723).
*For your convenience readings for the first two weeks of class (including assignments from required texts) are available on LATTE

I. GETTING STARTED: CONCEPTUALIZING AND STUDYING SEXUALITY

August 27. First Day of Class

September 1. Sexuality from a Social Scientific Perspective

- (S) #1.1. Jackson, Stevi and Sue Scott. "Conceptualizing Sexuality"

September 3. Theorizing Sexuality

- (S) #5.2. Seidman, Steven. "Critique of Compulsory Heterosexuality"

September 8. Studying Sexuality: Sexuality Research

- (S) #1.3 Das, Anirudda and Edward Laumann. "How to Get Valid Answers from Survey Questions"
- (S) #1.4 Franke, Katherine. "Thinking Critically about Strip Club Research"

September 10. No Class (Brandeis on Monday Schedule)
September 15. No Class (Rosh Hashanah)

II. THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF SEX, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

September 17. Constructing Heterosexualities

  ➢ Chapters 1-3

September 24.

  ➢ Chapters 5-6

September 29. No Class (Brandeis on Monday Schedule)

October 1. Modern Analyses of Sexuality


III. SEXUAL SELVES IN SOCIETY

October 6. Race, Class, Gender and Sexual Identities


**October 8.**


**October 13. Asexuality**

➔ **Paper 1 due**

Recommended:
• (S) #7.1 Carrigan, Mark. "There's More to Life than Sex? Difference and Commonality within the Asexual Community"
• [In class] Film: *(A)Sexual* (2012)

**October 20. Sexual Identity and Communities**

• (L) Brown-Saracino, Japonica. "From the Lesbian Ghetto to Ambient Community: The Perceived Costs and Benefits of Integration for Community"

**October 22. Experiencing Sex and Sexuality**

• (S) #2.2. Carpenter, Laura. "The Ambiguity of "Having Sex": The Subjective Experience of Virginity Loss in the United States"

➔ Discuss final paper/presentation assignment

**October 27. Trans-genders and Sexualities**

**October 29.**


**IV. SEX, SEXUALITY AND SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS**

**November 3. Sex Education and Social Policy**

→ **Final Paper Topics Due**

  ➢ Chapters 1-2, 5-6

**November 5. Sex, Gender and The Body**


**November 10. Technology and Sexual Politics**

➢ Introduction- Chapter 3

November 12.

➢ Chapter 4- Conclusion

November 17. Media, Popular Culture, and the Commercialization of Sex

➢ (S) #9.3. Menard, Dana A. and Peggy J. Kleinplatz. "Twenty-One Moves Guaranteed to Make his Thighs go up in Flames: Depictions of "Great Sex" in Popular Magazines"

November 19. Work Groups

➢ Be prepared to discuss your final project with your peers during class. You will be assigned to a group based on topic/perspective(s).

November 24 and 26. No Class (Thanksgiving Holiday)

December 1. Student Presentations

➢ Student Presentations

December 3. Student Presentations

➢ Student Presentations

December 8: Student Presentations/ Wrap up

➢ Final Papers Due