

American Sexualities

MWF, 3:30-4:20 p.m.
King 323

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Office hours: Tues. & Wed., 2-3 p.m., Fri. 11a.m.-12 p.m., or by appointment.

Course Description: This course will examine the creation, maintenance, and reproduction of sexual differences and identities over a broad time span in North American history, beginning with Native American sexual practices and social formations, and stretching through the modernization of sex. Major topics will include: marriage, changing gender roles, the intersection of sexuality with race and ethnicity, commercialized sex, reproduction, same sex sexual practices, contraception, sexual violence, heterosexism, danger, desire, and pleasure.

Required Texts (available at the Oberlin Bookstore):

Kathy Peiss, editor, *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*

Nancy F. Cott, *Public Vows: A History of Marriage and the Nation*

John D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a Homosexual Minority in the United States*

Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*

On days when we have assigned reading in one of the required books, bring your copy of the book to class.

Other Required Sources:

A number of additional readings are being placed on ERES. Please print out copies of these readings and bring them to class on the days we're scheduled to discuss them. If you have trouble finding or reading an ERES text, let me know ASAP so I can correct the problem. Hard copies of the ERES texts have been placed on regular reserve, so use those if you have problems accessing or downloading the ERES versions. **Unless otherwise noted, all readings not in the required books will be found on ERES.**

Course Assignments and Grading:

Attendance and Participation (1/3 of course grade): Student participation is crucial to the success of this course. Students are expected to come to class having carefully read the assigned texts; to play an active role in class discussions and small group in-class projects; to complete short in-class writing assignments; and to post discussion questions on Blackboard before class on assigned days. Students will be permitted two unexcused absences over the course of the semester. Additional absences will result in the lowering of the student's participation grade unless approved by the instructor in advance or in the case of documented illness or family emergency.

Short Papers (1/3 of course grade): Students will write 4 short papers (due on Sept. 7, Sept. 17, Oct. 1, and Nov. 12) in response to the assigned readings. Grades for late papers will be marked down one grade step (e.g. A- to B+) per day late, except in cases of documented illness or family emergency or by pre-arrangement with the instructor.

Biographical Paper and Presentation (1/3 of course grade): Each student will select a historical or contemporary figure whose life and/or work intersects in a significant way with the themes of the course and write a paper discussing how that person's experience illuminates our understanding of the history of sexuality during the period the individual lived. Research for the paper, due at the end of the semester, will require reading at least two books (or a book and two or three academic articles) about the subject. A biography, autobiography or memoir, oral history, collection of the subject's writings, or an academic monograph or article in which the subject plays a significant role would be appropriate source materials. I will hand out a list of potential subjects and sources a couple of weeks into the semester; students will be expected to select a subject and identify major sources by October 8. (You may pick a subject not on my list as long as you can identify appropriate source materials and demonstrate the individual's connection to the themes of the course.) In addition, students working on similar themes or the same time period will work together to prepare a presentation for the class on their topics. The presentations will take place during the last week of classes.

Academic Integrity: All course work is governed by the Oberlin Honor Code. You will be expected to attach a signed statement of the Honor Pledge to every written assignment. We will discuss how the Honor Code applies to specific assignments in more detail over the course of the semester.

Class Schedule

- Sept. 5 Introduction to Course
- Sept. 7 Approaches to Framing the History of Sexuality
Major Problems, Chapter 1; John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman, “Problems Encountered in Writing the History of Sexuality”
<http://www.jstor.org/view/00224499/ap060103/06a00040/0>
Response Paper (1-2 pp.): Compare and Contrast the Different Readings. What do you see as the authors’ main points of agreement or disagreement? Which of their approaches/questions do you find the most helpful? The most troubling? Do they raise any issues/questions that you’d like to return to over the course of the semester?
- Sept. 10 Sexual “Contact”
Major Problems, Chapter 2; Jennifer Morgan, “ ‘Some Could Suckle Over Their Shoulder’: Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Ideology, 1500-1700”
- Sept. 12 Family, Community, and Sexuality in Early New England
Major Problems, Chapter 3: Docs. 1 and 3 and Godbeer essay (“Sodomy in Colonial New England”); Paula Treckel, “Breastfeeding and Maternal Sexuality in Colonial America”
- Sept. 14 Sexual and Gender Identity and Regulation in Early Virginia
Major Problems, Chapter 3: Docs. 2 and 4 and Brown essay (“ ‘Changed ... into the Fashion of a Man’ ...”)
- Sept. 17 Pregnancy, Abortion and Death in 18th century New England
Cornelia Hughes Dayton, “Taking the Trade”
Paper (3-4 pp.): What does this article tell us about attitudes towards extramarital sex and pregnancy in colonial New England? Who or what would you say was most responsible for Sarah Grosvenor’s death?
- Sept. 19 Marriage, Monogamy, and the State in the Early Republic
Cott, *Public Vows*, Introduction, Chapters 1 and 2.
- Sept. 21 Male License and Female Purity
Major Problems, Chapter 4
- Sept. 24 Race, Sex, and Violence in the Antebellum South
Major Problems, Chapter 5: Docs. 1-4, Stevenson essay (“Slave Marriage and Family Relations”); excerpts from Mary Boykin Chestnut’s *Diary*

- Sept. 26 Slavery, Abolitionism, and Women's Rights
Cott, *Public Vows*, chapter 3; *Major Problems*, chapter 5: Painter essay
("Soul Murder and Slavery")
- Sept. 28 Sex, Race, and Marriage after the Civil War
Cott, *Public Vows*, Chapter 4; *Major Problems*, Chapter 5: Docs 5-7;
Jacquelyn Dowd Hall, " 'The Mind That Burns in Each Body': Women,
Rape, and Racial Violence"
- Oct. 1 Homosocial and Homoerotic Relationships in the late 19th century
Major Problems, Chapter 6; Martha Vicinus, " 'They Wonder to Which
Sex I Belong': The Historical Roots of the Modern Lesbian Identity"
Response Paper (1-2 pp): Is it appropriate or is it ahistorical to identify
the 19th century women discussed in these documents and articles as
lesbians? Support your response with evidence from the readings.
- Oct. 3 Victorian Culture Wars
Major Problems, Chapter 7; Cott, *Public Vows*, chapter 5
- Oct. 5 Working-Class, Immigrant, and Urban Sexual Mores During the Progressive Era
Major Problems, Chapter 8; Cott, *Public Vows*, Chapter 6
- Oct. 8 Early Feminist Visions of Marriage and Family
Cott, *Public Vows*, Chapter 7; Ellen Kay Trimberger, "Feminism, Men,
and Modern Love: Greenwich Village, 1900-1925"
Hand Paper in: Proposal and Bibliography for Biographical
- Oct. 10 Reproductive Rights and Wrongs
Major Problems, Chapter 9 (entire) and Chapter 13, doc. 1 and Brandt
essay ("The Tuskegee Syphilis Study")
- Oct. 12 Sexuality Goes Public: 1920s and 1930s
Major Problems, Chapter 10
- Oct. 15 The Impact of WWII
Cott, *Public Vows*, Chapter 8; D'Emilio, *Sexual Politics, Sexual
Communities*, Part 1; Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, chapter 1.

- Oct. 17 The Kinsey Report
Major Problems, Chapter 11, docs 1 and 2; Regina Morantz, “The Scientist as Sex Crusader: Alfred Kinsey and American Culture”; Bailey, chapter 2.
- Oct. 19 NO CLASS Professor Estepa away at a conference
- Oct. 22 NO CLASS Fall Recess
- Oct. 24 NO CLASS Fall Recess
- Oct. 26 NO CLASS Fall Recess
- Oct. 29 Sex in the ‘50s: Repressive or Revolutionary?
Major Problems, chapter 11, docs 3-7 and Serlin and Escoffier essays; D’Emilio, Part 2; Brett Harvey, *The Fifties*, chapters 1, 2, and 4; Dan Wakefield, *New York in the ‘50s*, chapter 8 (“Roses, Dreams, and Diaphragms”)
- Oct. 31 Gay Life in the 60s
D’Emilio, Part 3; *Major Problems*, Chapter 12, Docs. 1 and 7 and Stein essay (“Sex Politics in the City of Sisterly and Brotherly Loves”)
- Nov. 2 The Straight 60s
Bailey, chapter 3; *Major Problems*, Chapter 12, docs. 2-4 and Allyn essay (“Fomenting a Sexual Revolution”)
- Nov. 5 The Pill and Abortion Rights
Bailey, chapter 4; *Major Problems*, chapter 12, doc. 5; Simone M. Caron, “Birth Control and the Black Community in the 1960s: Genocide or Power Politics?”
- Nov. 7 Whose Sexual Revolution?
Bailey, chapters 5 and 6; *Major Problems*, Chapter 12, doc. 6; Anne Koedt, “The Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm”
- Nov. 9 Gay Life and Liberation After Stonewall
D’Emilio, Part 4 and Afterword; Robert McRuer, “Gay Gatherings: Reimagining the Counterculture”

- Nov. 12 The Feminist Pornography Wars
 Excerpts from Catharine MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin, *In Harm's Way: The Pornography Civil Rights Hearings*; Ellen Willis, "Feminism, Moralism, and Pornography," Ann Snitow, "Mass Market Romance: Pornography for Women is Different"
Paper (5 pp.): What was the Sexual Revolution? Was There a Sexual Revolution? Based on your reading of D'Emilio and Bailey, what about Americans understanding of, attitudes towards, and practice of changed during the mid-late 20th century? What didn't? How were people's lives affected? What subsets of the population were affected least and most?
- Nov. 14 Abortion After Roe
 Excerpts from Kristen Luker *Abortion and the Politics of Mothering*; Rosalind Petchesky, "Reproductive Freedom: Beyond 'A Woman's Right to Choose' "; Emily Bazelon, "Is There a Post-Abortion Syndrome?"
- Nov. 16 Lesbian Identity During and After Women's Liberation
 Excerpts from *Dear Sisters: Dispatches from the Women's Liberation Movement*; Lillian Faderman, "The Return of Butch and Femme"
- Nov. 19 The AIDS Crisis
Major Problems, Chapter 13, Docs. 3-6 and Bayer essay; excerpts from *AIDS, While the World Sleeps*
- Nov. 21 Contraception or Disease Prevention?
 Joshua Gamson, "Rubber Wars"; Scott Bravman, "Comment on Gamson"; Russell Shorto, "Contra-contraception"
- Nov. 23 NO CLASS Thanksgiving Recess
- Nov. 26 The Gay Marriage Debate
 Cott, *Public Vows*, Chapter 9; George Chauncey, "Why Marriage Became a Goal," Claudia Card, "Against Marriage and Motherhood"
- Nov. 28 The Return of Virginity
 Excerpts from Wendy Shalit, *A Return to Modesty*; Stephanie Rosenbloom, "A Ring That Says 'No, Not Yet' "; True Love Waits websites: <http://www.lifeway.com/tlw/> and <http://www.lovematters.com/truelovewaits.htm>

- Nov. 30 Procreation without Sex
Excerpts from Liza Mundy, *Everything Conceivable*; Anne Donchin, “The Future of Mothering: Reproductive Technology and Feminist Theory” and Kim Blankenship, et. al., “Reproductive Technologies and the U.S. Courts”
- Dec. 3 At the Intersection of Identities
Major Problems, Chapter 14, doc. 5 and Almaguer essay (“Chicano Men, A Cartography of Homosexual Identity”); Evelyn M. Hammonds, “Toward a Genealogy of Black Female Sexuality”
- Dec. 5 Either, Neither, or Both?
Excerpts from Anne Fausto-Sterling, *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*; Katrin Roen, “Either/Or and Both/Neither: Discursive Tensions in Transgender Politics” and Patricia Gagne, et. al., “Coming Out and Crossing Over: Identity Formation and Proclamation in a Transgender Community”
- Dec. 7 Student Presentations
- Dec. 10 Student Presentations
- Dec. 12 Student Presentations
Biographical Paper Due