

History and Theory of Sexuality: Sex and Power in the US

ENGL 0050 910 Summer Session 1 2023

M/W 5:15-7:45 EST Zoom

Instructor: Matty Hemming (she/her)

(mhemming@sas.upenn.edu)

Office Hours: Zoom TBD & by appointment.

Class Description

What is the relationship between sex and power in the US? How have understandings of sexual identity, sexual consent, and the politics of reproduction changed over the past two centuries? And what role has “sex” played in the history of ideas about race, gender, class, disability, and nationality? To answer these questions, this course will trace the connections between key moments in US history in which “sex” and “power” collided in formative ways: from the reproductive politics of mid-nineteenth century slavery, to the sexual revolution and the Stonewall uprising of 1969, to the contemporary #metoo movement.

Learning Outcomes

- To understand and be able to think critically about the ways that scholars, writers, and artists have theorized the history of sexuality and its intersection with gender, race, class, and other axes of identity.
- To be familiar with major debates and thinkers in sexuality studies as well as connected fields such as Black feminism, trans studies, indigenous studies, and disability studies.
- To have developed the skills of close reading needed to become careful and critical readers of literary, visual, and theoretical texts.

Assignments

Attendance and Participation 25 %

Attendance is required. If you need to miss a class, please reach out to me beforehand. You are permitted to take one absence, but, because this is an accelerated course, any further absences will result in a deduction of your final grade. If you have any difficulties or are in a unique situation regarding time-zones, travel, caregiving, work, or other challenges please reach out to me ASAP so that we can create a plan together that will allow you to participate in the class.

Weekly Reading Responses (50%)

Each week you will submit a short paper of 2-3 pages. These papers will help you to develop your close reading skills and will involve offering a “reading” of that week’s primary object (i.e. literary text or film).

Final Project 25 %

For your final project, you can either write a 10–12 page scholarly essay, based on your independent and in-depth research, or you can undertake a creative project (in a medium of your choosing) based in the same kind of research. If you choose the creative option, you must also write a 5-7 page critical reflection on the piece; please consult with me early in the course if you think you’d like to choose this option and we can discuss different approaches. In either case, your final project does not have to deal exclusively with the materials encountered in class but

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should grow out of the issues we have addressed. You will submit a proposal for this project which will be factored into your grade.

Grading Scale

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|------------|------------|
| 93-100 = A | 73-75 = C |
| 90-92 = A- | 70-72 = C- |
| 86-89 = B+ | 67-69 = D+ |
| 83-85 = B | 63-66 = D |
| 80-82 = B- | 60-62 = D- |
| 76-79 = C+ | 0-59 = F |

Meeting Structure

We will meet Mondays and Wednesdays from 5:15 - 7:45pm EST on zoom. During our first meeting we will discuss options for replacing a portion of synchronous class time with asynchronous activities.

Required Texts

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861)
Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (1936)
Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)

All other class materials will be available via Canvas or Penn Libraries (Franklin).

Course Schedule

Week 1: What is the “history” of sexuality?

M 05/ 22

Roderick Ferguson, “Introduction” and “The multidimensional beginnings of gay liberation” from *One Dimensional Queer* (2019) 1-45

W 05/ 24

John D’Emilio “Capitalism and Gay Identity” (1993) 467-476

Susan Stryker “(De)subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies” from *The Transgender Studies Reader* (2006) 1-17

Adrienne Rich, “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (1980) 23-75

Week 2: American Family Drama

M 05/29

Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book” 1987) 64-81

Kim Tallbear, “Making Love and Relations Beyond Settler Sex and Family” (2018) 145-164

W 05/ 31

Harriet Jacobs, *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*

Week 3: The “Birth” of the Homosexual and the “Science” of Race

M 06/05

Siobhan Somerville, “Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body” from *Queering the Color Line* (2000) 15-38

Michel Foucault, “We Other Victorians” and “The Repressive Hypothesis” from *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction* (1978) 17-49

W 06/ 07

Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (1936)

Week 4: The Sexual Revolution and the Sex Wars

M 06/12

Toni Cade Bamabra, “The Pill: Genocide or Liberation?” (1970) 162-169

Amber Hollibaugh and Cherríe Moraga, “What We’re Rollin’ Around in Bed With” (1983) 394-405

Audre Lorde, “The Uses of the Erotic” (1978) 53-59

W 06/13

Toni Morrison, *Sula* (1973)

Week 5: HIV and The Family

M 06/19

Leo Bersani, “Is the Rectum a Grave?” (1987) 197-222

Watch: Marlon Riggs, *Tongues Untied* (1989)

W 06/21

Cathy J. Cohen, “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” (1997) 437- 465

Lee Edelman, “The Future is Kid Stuff” from *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (2004) 1-31

Watch: David France, *How to Survive a Plague* (2012)

Week 6: Sex and Power in the 21st Century

M 06/ 26

Watch: Mindy Kaling “Cheating” from *The Sex Lives of College Girls* (2021)

W 06/ 28

TBD

Course Policies

Attendance

Please come to class on time and ready for discussion. You are permitted to take one absence. Except in cases of documented emergencies, further absences will be reflected in your final grade.

Assignments: Submission Guidelines and Extensions

Please submit all assignments electronically by **11:59pm** on the day that they are due. I ask that you submit all written work as a word (doc.x) document, and that you use double spacing, 12pt font, and 1-inch margins. Because this is an accelerated course I will not grant extensions except in cases of true emergency (having a heavy workload is not an emergency!).

Student Accessibility

I am committed to making this class accessible and responsive to student needs. Everyone learns differently and benefits from various accommodations. If certain circumstances affect your performance in class – positively or adversely – please let me know so we can collaboratively create an inclusive and generative space. If you have a disability (physical, learning, psychological, or otherwise) that you think may affect your performance in this class, please contact me (ideally during the first week of the term) so we can make arrangements, if necessary, for your full access to all classroom activities. In addition, please contact Penn's Office of Student Disabilities Services (located at Stouffer Commons, 3702 Spruce Street, Suite 300; phone: 2155739235; web address: <http://www.vpul.upenn.edu/lrc/sds/>). All services are confidential.

Academic Integrity

All work for this class must be original, with sources properly cited. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism or academic dishonesty, please see the University of Pennsylvania's Code of Academic Integrity at <https://catalog.upenn.edu/pennbook/code-of-academic-integrity/> . If you still have questions, please bring them to me.

Difficult Content

Some of the material that we are reading in this class discusses issues and contains imagery and language that can be difficult to encounter. Certain texts depict instances of racism, sexism and/or sexual violence which their authors do not endorse, but which can nonetheless be upsetting and potentially triggering for readers. If you feel the need to step away during one of our class discussions, either for just a moment or for the entire session, you may always do so without academic penalty. If you do leave the zoom room for significant time, please make arrangements to get notes from another student, or make an appointment to see me individually to discuss the situation. I welcome discussions about your personal experience of material as an appropriate part of our work in this class. Do not hesitate to approach me if you feel there are measures I can take to make the online classroom a safer space for you.

Statement on Names and Pronouns

In our classroom, it is important that we refer to everyone by the name and pronouns that they prefer. Pronouns can be a way to affirm someone's gender identity, but they can also be unrelated to a person's identity. They are simply a public way in which people are referred to in place of

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their name (e.g. “he” or “she” or “they” or “ze” or many others). In this classroom, you are invited but not required to share the pronouns you use, and I ask us all to commit to being attentive to and using each other’s preferred pronouns. If you accidentally misgender someone or use an incorrect pronoun for them, please simply correct yourself to a pronoun that they prefer. If during the course you would like me to change the name or pronouns I am using for you, please let me know.

University Resources

[Penn Violence Prevention](#)

[Weingarten Learning Resources Center](#)

[Office of Student Disability Services](#)

[Writing Center](#)

[Counseling and Psychological Services \(CAPS\)](#)

[First Generation Low-Income \(FGLI\) program](#)

[The Office of the Chaplain](#)

[Cultural Resource Centers](#)

[Penn Women’s Center](#)

[Penn LGBT Center](#)