

ONLINE
SOCIOLOGY OF SEXUALITY
SOCI 0319, Section 001

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Fall, 2014

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Course Description and Objectives

There are many different lenses we can use to think about sex and sexuality—religious, biological, physiological, and psychological, just to name a few. In this course the main objective is to make the socially constructed nature of sexuality in American society evident as we examine the subject historically and reflect sociologically on how changing norms, social structures and social control practices have transformed human sexuality. We will consider the influence of economic and political transformations in late-nineteenth and twentieth century on sexual meaning and identity as well as looking at contemporary issues that shape our own desires and lifestyles. This course will illuminate the normative dimensions of behavior that might appear on first view as “natural”, reflect and discuss the contexts in which learn sexual norms and consider meanings of sexual bodies. We will explore the meaning of sexuality constructed in popular culture, in commercial markets and civil institutions, and ways in which sexuality intersects with race, gender, and political mechanisms of social control. My aim is to encourage everyone participating to become astute critiques of current media representations of sexuality, to engage themselves in debates about such issues as film ratings, the legal process of defining obscenity, redressing discrimination against same sex practices, sentencing sex offenders, sex education in schools, and covenant and interracial marriage by stimulating open discussion on discussion boards, our virtual classroom and in chatrooms. The texts and podcasts will consider how behavior perceived as deviant, diseased and disordered has been medicalized and the depoliticizing effects of medicalization. We will consider how relations between sex and power can be reconfigured in contemporary social movements affecting the politics of AIDS, lesbian and gay rights, and sexual violence. Finally, by the end of this course, all participants should gain ability to reflect, carefully analyze, and think critically about sexualities as socially constructed and controlled. Everyone is expected to give a podcast presentation, participate regularly to chat and discussion groups, write 3 short reflection essays.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Steven Seidman, Nancy Fischer and Chet Meeks Eds. *Introducing the New Sexuality Studies*, second edition Routledge, 2011. (Available in Westfield State University Bookstore)

D’Emilio, John and Estelle B. Freedman. . *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America*, 2nd Edition. University of Chicago Press. 1997. (Available by Sept. 21 in Westfield State University Bookstore)

Recommended text from which selected articles will be available:

Stompler, Mindy, et. al. *Sex Matters: The Sexuality and Society Reader*, Fourth Edition, WW Norton, 2013