SOCIOLOGY 135: SEXUAL CULTURES  
Spring 2014

INSTRUCTOR  
Jill Bakehorn, Ph.D.  
E-mail: jabakehorn@berkeley.edu  
Office: 492 Barrows Hall  
Office Hours: Mondays and Wednesdays 11:30am-1:30pm and by appointment  
Sign-up: http://wejoinin.com/sheets/fbpwu

CLASS MEETING  
Tuesdays and Thursdays 12:30-2pm  
160 Kroeber

COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this course we will be drawing upon social construction theory to examine the creation, reproduction, and stratification of sexualities and sexual cultures in particular social, cultural, historical, and political contexts.

The course will begin with an examination of sociological theories of sexuality, including queer theory. How do sociologists approach the study of sexuality? What do we mean by sexuality? How has this definition changed over time? What implications does this have for people’s lives? We will then unpack terms like heterosexual, gay, lesbian, bisexual, queer, transgender, asexual, polyamorous, and others. Next, we will explore a few of the many issues of sexuality across the life course including hookup culture and medicalization. We will end the first half of the semester by looking at bodies and how they reflect, or are subject to, cultural norms of sexuality.

In the second half of the semester, we will focus on the pornography industry. We will apply the theories and understandings of sexualities learned in the first part of the course to the modern day pornography industry in the United States. We will examine the history, laws, policies, public sentiment, debates, and politics of the industry, paying particular attention to pornography made by women. We will examine how the sex industry can be a reflection of and reinforce sexual inequalities, but can also be used to challenge these inequalities.

Sexuality will be explored in relationship to other social locations such as gender, race, class, and ethnicity. The differential effects of sexuality and sexual politics along these lines will be discussed and highlighted throughout all of the applied topics.
Some of questions about sexuality and sexual cultures that will be addressed:

‣ What does it mean to say that sexualities are constructed?
‣ How have sexualities been constructed over time?
‣ How does sexual practice become sexual identity?
‣ How does queer theory inform our understandings of sexualities?
‣ What are the major debates about pornography?
‣ What is feminist porn?
‣ How are race, class, gender, and sexual identity represented in pornography?
‣ How do women and men consume pornography?

Keep in mind this is a sociology course. Just to refresh your memory, sociology is the study of human social activity, organization, and interaction. Sociology is about the search for patterned behavior and social, rather than individual, explanations for this behavior. Sociologists look beyond the taken-for-granted notions of our social environment to examine the many layers of social meaning in the human experience. (If this doesn’t sound familiar to you, or you are unclear about the sociological perspective, please refer to your introductory sociology text for a refresher.)

This class will be challenging on a number of levels:

❖ You will be expected to keep up with a number of readings for each class meeting.
❖ These readings will be challenging not only in terms of their length and number, but also in terms of the subject matter presented and the complex theories proposed.
❖ We will be challenging common sense, taken-for-granted notions of sexuality.
❖ We will be speaking frankly about issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Some topics may be challenging in the sense that you may find the subject matter embarrassing or difficult to discuss.

This course challenges many taken-for-granted assumptions about sexuality and the social world. Keep in mind that your personal experiences may not match the general sociological insights discussed in the course. This does not negate the insights. Ask yourself why this might be the case. You may not agree with everything we read and discuss, but I expect you to have an open mind and demonstrate your knowledge of the sociological perspective. Disagreements and debates are expected and welcome in this class, however, I will not tolerate personal attacks.

This class addresses a number of issues pertaining to gender and sexuality. Some of these topics will be graphic, controversial, or explicit. Frank discussions and presentation of material may include things that some find offensive.

REQUIRED TEXTS


Readings on bCourses
ASSIGNMENTS

Reading Responses: You will complete three response papers. Each is worth 15% of your final grade. Due dates are listed in the course outline. I will upload response paper prompts to bCourses one week prior to the due date. No late responses are accepted without prior approval by the instructor.

These reading responses will test your comprehension of course readings as well as your ability to explain, synthesize, and make connections between the readings in your own words. Because you will not be able to rely on direct quotations of the material, you must focus on your own understanding and articulation of the texts.

Exams: You will write a take-home midterm and final exam--both are in essay format. The Midterm is worth 25% and the Final Exam is worth 30% of your final grade. You will be responsible for course readings, lectures, and any media presented in the class.

GRADE BREAKDOWN:
Reading Responses (45%)
Exams (55%)
    Midterm (25%)
    Final Exam (30%)

COURSE FORMAT AND POLICIES

Readings: Readings should be completed prior to class. You must keep up with the readings to participate in class discussions and complete assignments. Bring your reading materials to every class; you will likely need to refer to them in class discussions. All of your assigned readings (aside from the required book) are available on bCourses. Be sure to download them early.

Participation: This class will incorporate the use of lecture, films, music, visuals, and group discussions. I expect you to be an active participant in the course. Bring your questions and comments to class and don’t be shy about bringing them up.

I like to start class with a short discussion of topical cultural issues that you have come across. If you see a movie, listen to a song, overhear a conversation, or witness an interaction that ties into issues we have been discussing, please share this with the class!

You can also participate by posting links to news stories or videos, as well as any relevant thoughts on issues related to culture in the chat room on bCourses. Be sure to contextualize any posts by connecting them to issues in the class.

If you have a question about the readings, lecture, etc., please post your question to the chat room on bCourses where both your questions and my answers will be visible to other students, rather than e-mailing me. Feel free to answer each other’s questions as well.
If you miss a class, do not ask me if you missed anything. Of course you did!—but don’t expect me to fill you in. I suggest sharing contact information with a classmate early on in the semester and getting the notes you missed.

Do not read, listen to music, browse the Internet, text, or sleep during class. If you want to do these things, don’t bother coming to class.

Email: Please clearly indicate to which class you are referring in your emails to me. I endeavor to respond to emails within 24 hours, but this is not always possible; please be patient.

**GRADING POLICIES**

For assignments turned in via bCourses, your feedback can be found in a file there. Be sure to download this file and carefully consider the feedback. This feedback is provided to help you improve on future assignments.

If you would like to request a re-grade or re-evaluation of an assignment, you must first, wait 24 hours after the assignment was returned and second, write up a statement detailing why you believe you deserve a higher grade. This statement should be about the substance of your work, not about effort. **You must request a re-grade within 7 days of the assignment being returned.** My assessment and grade of your work will be used, even if that means you get a lower score than originally given for that work.

**ACADEMIC DISHONESTY**

Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is collaboration with other students on response papers or on exams or using notes during exams. Plagiarism includes turning in any work that is not your own as well as improper or missing citations of others’ works. As a student of the University of California, you are bound by the Code of Academic Conduct. Any cases of cheating or plagiarism will result in a referral to The Center for Student Conduct and a zero for that assignment.

Plagiarism is most likely to occur because students are unaware of how to cite their sources or because they feel desperate. If you get to this point in your writing, contact me ASAP rather than doing something you’ll very likely regret.

**OFFICE HOURS**

If you are having any difficulties with the material or assignments for the course or if you are having any personal problems that are affecting your ability to complete assignments on time, you should take advantage of office hours early in the semester. I will be much more amenable to granting extensions when I have been made aware of problems early on rather than at the last minute.
Remember that office hours are an important resource if for no other reason than getting to know your instructors could help you when you may need letters of recommendation.

**SPECIAL NEEDS**

**Disability Accommodations**

Please let me know early in the semester if you qualify for any disability accommodations.

**Student Learning Center**

“The primary academic support service for students at Berkeley, the SLC helps students transition to Cal; navigate the academic terrain; create networks of resources; and achieve academic, personal and professional goals.” Located in The Cesar Chavez Student Center on Lower Sproul Plaza. Front desk phone: 510 642 7332

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**COURSE OUTLINE**  
Readings are to be **completed** on the day listed below. Schedule is subject to change.

**WEEKS ONE AND TWO: CONSTRUCTING SEXUALITY**

**Tuesday, 1/21**  
Introductions

**Thursday, 1/23**  
The Social Construction of Sexuality


**Tuesday, 1/28**  
Constructing Sexual Hierarchies


**Thursday, 1/30**  
Critiques and Problems of The Social Construction of Sexuality

WEEK THREE: QUEER THEORY AND SOCIOLOGY OF SEXUALITY

Tuesday, 2/4  Queer Theory Meets Sociology


Thursday, 2/6  Queering Sociology


WEEKS FOUR & FIVE: (DE)CONSTRUCTING SEXUAL IDENTITIES

Tuesday, 2/11  Constructing the Homosexual and the Heterosexual


Thursday, 2/13  Troubling Sexual Identities and Attractions


Tuesday, 2/18  Negotiating Sexual Identities
**Reading Response 1 Due**


Thursday, 2/20       Non-Monogamies

Ritchie, Ani and Meg Barker. 2006. “There Aren't Words for What We Do or How We Feel So We Have To Make Them Up': Constructing Polyamorous Languages in a Culture of Compulsory Monogamy.” *Sexualities* 9(5): 584-601.


WEEKS SIX AND SEVEN: SEXUALITY OVER THE LIFE COURSE

Tuesday, 2/25       Creating Sexual Cultures for Youth

Solebello, Nicholas and Sinikka Elliot. 2011. “‘We Want Them to Be as Heterosexual as Possible': Fathers Talk about Their Teen Children's Sexuality.” *Gender & Society* 25(3): 293-315.


Thursday, 2/27      Hookup Culture


Tuesday, 3/4       Emancipatory Sexualization?


Thursday, 3/6       Medicalization


WEEKS EIGHT AND NINE: CULTURAL BODIES

Tuesday, 3/11  
Cultures of Violence?

**Take-Home Midterm Due**


Thursday, 3/13  
BDSM Cultures


Tuesday, 3/18  
Bodies of Resistance


Thursday, 3/20  
Catch-up/Review

WEEK TEN: SPRING BREAK! MONDAY, 3/24-FRIDAY, 3/28

WEEK ELEVEN: PORN POLITICS

Tuesday, 4/1  
The Feminist Sex Wars

**Reading Response 2 Due**


Thursday, 4/3  
**Sex Positivity**


**WEEK TWELVE: FEMINIST PORN**

Tuesday, 4/8  
**Women Making Pornography**


Thursday, 4/10  
**In Their Own Words: Feminist Pornographers**


**WEEK THIRTEEN: LGBTQ PORN**

Tuesday, 4/15  
**Gay/Lesbian Porn**


Ryberg, Ingrid. 2013. “‘Every time we fuck, we win’: The Public Sphere of Queer, Feminist, and Lesbian Porn as a (Safe) Space for Sexual Empowerment.” Pp 140-154 in *The Feminist Porn Book*
Thursday, 4/17  Genderqueer/Trans* Porn


WEEK FOURTEEN: RACE AND CLASS IN PORNOGRAPHY

Tuesday, 4/22  Depicting Class

**Reading Response 3 Due**


Thursday, 4/24  Depicting Race


WEEK FIFTEEN: CONSUMING PORNOGRAPHY

Tuesday, 4/29  What Women and Men Want


Thursday, 5/1  Catch up/Review

WEEK SIXTEEN: READING, REVIEW, AND RECITATION

Monday, 5/5- Friday, 5/9

FINAL EXAM DUE: THURSDAY, MAY 15 6:00 pm