

Sociology 135: Sexual Cultures

Spring 2021

INSTRUCTOR Jill Bakehorn, Ph.D. (Pronouns: she/her or they/them)
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Drop-in Office Hours: Thursdays 2:30-3:30pm

Sign-up Office Hours: Tuesdays 11:15am-12:15pm

Wednesdays 12:30-2:00pm

Sign-up: <https://calendly.com/bakehorn/office-hours>

CLASS MEETING Tuesdays and Thursdays 9:30-10:59am
(Zoom lectures will be recorded)

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. While many people think of sexuality as inherent, biological, and purely “natural”, we will be challenging the idea of a “pre-social” sexuality. You will come to see sexuality as something that is constructed and structured by and through social relations.

The course begins with an examination of sociological theories of sexuality. 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 also examine queer theory and the challenges it poses to common-sense understandings of sexuality and identity.

Utilizing these theories, we will explore the tension between our sense of self or subjectivity and the larger social structures, cultures, and communities in which we are embedded. How do people make sense of sexual feelings, behaviors, and identities within larger sociocultural contexts? We will discuss structural dynamics like gender norms, heteronormativity, racial hierarchies, class cultures, scientific knowledge, institutional constraints, and cultural spheres and how these impact individuals’ sense and understanding of their own sexuality and what is possible. How do collective groups challenge, expand, and transform the boundaries of sexuality and sexual identities?

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. Some of these topics will be graphic, controversial, or explicit. Frank discussions and presentation of material may include things that some find offensive or that differ greatly from your own experiences, preferences, and beliefs. It is important that we are non-judgmental.

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.

Course Goals

- ❖ Move beyond understanding sexuality as “natural”
- ❖ Use a social constructionist approach to understanding sexuality
- ❖ Explore sexuality as a cultural phenomenon and how culture impacts individual experiences of sexuality, including identity and practices
- ❖ Introduce queer theory
- ❖ Adopt an intersectional understanding of sexuality

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the semester you should be able to:

- ❖ Explain the social constructionist perspective in relation to sexuality
- ❖ Apply the main tenets of queer theory
- ❖ Connect sociological theories to the social world and your experiences
- ❖ Use an intersectional approach to discussing social phenomena
- ❖ Understand how our sexualities are shaped by sociocultural forces and how we may contribute to changing societal understandings of sexuality
- ❖ Write succinct papers that effectively synthesize course materials and apply theory

Required Texts

Ward, Jane. 2015. *Not Gay: Sex Between Straight White Men*. New York: New York University Press. (Available as a PDF on bCourses)

Taormino, Tristan, Celine Parreñas Shimizu, Constance Penley, and Mireille Miller-Young. 2013. *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*. New York: The Feminist Press. (Available as a PDF on bCourses)

Course Reader: Available digitally on bCourses and in digital and hardcopy form from Copy Central (they will ship it to you if you are not local).

Assignments

Reading Responses: These reading responses test your comprehension of course readings as well as your ability to explain concepts **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. You will also be asked to make connections between the course materials and your experience of the social world.

Essay Exams: Midterm and final exam. You will be responsible for course readings, lectures, and any media presented in the class. These exams will focus on your ability to apply theories and to synthesize and make connections between various readings.

All work must be original (you cannot recycle work from other courses).

Participation: Homework which could include individual reflections, collaborative assignments, and online discussions. These assignments are designed to keep you motivated and engaged with the course, to provide opportunities for you to check your comprehension, and to prepare for graded assignments. **You must complete 10 of the 12 assignments in order to get full credit.** You will receive either full credit (10 points) or zero for each assignment.

Grade Breakdown

Reading Responses (30%)

Midterm (25%)

Final Exam (30%)

Participation Assignments (15%)

You must complete all assignments in order to pass the course.

GRADE SCALE

Grade Range		Grade
100%	97%	A+
96%	93%	A
92%	90%	A-
89%	87%	B+
86%	83%	B
82%	80%	B-
79%	77%	C+
76%	73%	C
72%	70%	C-
69%	67%	D+
66%	63%	D
62%	60%	D-
59%	50%	F

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.

Course Slides: I use course slides which often incorporate media. I will post course slides, but they will only contain the text. Keep in mind that these slides are meant to be a guide during lecture and are therefore not exhaustive or a substitute for attending/ watching lecture.

Zoom Etiquette and Tips: Please refer to [this guide](#).

Email: 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.

Names and Pronouns: You have the right to be referred to by the name you prefer and with the correct gender pronouns. Because the name listed in University records may not correspond to your preferred name, please inform me of your name (and pronunciation) and your pronouns so that I can ensure you are properly recognized and respected.

You can refer to me as Prof. Bakehorn, Dr. Bakehorn, or Jill. My pronouns are she/they.

Grading Policies

No late assignments will be accepted without prior approval. Grades are not curved.

All assignments will be checked by TurnItIn for plagiarism. Keep in mind, this program keeps a database of previously turned in papers as well as searching the internet.

Be sure to carefully consider assignment feedback; it is provided to help you improve on future assignments. For in-text feedback, **click on the link "View Feedback"** which may not be visible if you are not in full-screen mode.

To **request a re-grade** of an assignment: 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. Be sure to make specific reference to your work, don't simply say that you responded to the questions asked. Demonstrate how you did so. **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

The University defines academic misconduct as “any action or attempted action that may result in creating an unfair academic advantage for oneself or an unfair academic advantage or disadvantage for any other member or members of the academic community” (UC Berkeley Code of Student Conduct).

Academic dishonesty includes cheating and plagiarism. Cheating is collaboration with other students on response papers and 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 failing grade for that assignment.

Plagiarism is most likely to occur because students are unaware of how to cite 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

Please see Page 1 or [this link](#) for information about my 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, please take advantage of office hours—I am here to help!

Remember that office hours are an important resource if for no other reason than getting to know your instructors could help you in the future when you may need letters of recommendation. You do not need to be struggling or have course-specific questions to go to office hours.

Student Support Services

Course Accessibility

This course is intended for all UC Berkeley students, including those with mental, emotional, physical, or cognitive disabilities, illnesses, injuries, impairments, or any other condition that can negatively impact equal access to education. If, at any point in the semester, you find yourself not able to fully access the space, content, and experience of this course, you are welcome (but not required) to contact me by email or during office hours to discuss your specific needs.

I also encourage you to contact the [Disabled Students' Program](#). If you have a diagnosis, DSP can help you document your needs and create an accommodation plan. By making a plan through DSP, you can ensure appropriate accommodations without disclosing your condition or diagnosis to course instructors.

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."

Sexual Harassment and Violence Support Services

To learn more about these issues, how to support survivors, or how to file a report and receive support services, start here: <http://survivorsupport.berkeley.edu>. **Please note that I am not a confidential advocate; I am a mandated reporter.** You can speak to a [Confidential Care Advocate](#).

Economic, Food, and Housing Support

If you are in need of economic, food, or housing support, you can find help at [the Basic Needs Center](#). You may be eligible for money to buy groceries via [Calfresh](#) or our [Food Assistance Program](#). If you are in need of food immediately, please contact our UC Berkeley [Food Pantry](#). More information can be found [here](#).

Technology and Internet Support

Please see [this page](#) for the latest information on university-provided support.

Course Outline

Complete readings on the day listed below. Course schedule is subject to change.

Weeks One-Three: Constructing Sexuality & Queer Theory

Tuesday, 1/19 Introductions

Thursday, 1/21 The Social Construction of Sexuality

Seidman, Steven. 2010. "Social Constructionism: Sociology, History, and Philosophy." Pp 25-39 in *The Social Construction of Sexuality*. 2nd ed. New York: W.W. Norton.

Foucault, Michel. 1990. "We 'Other Victorians.'" Pp 3-13 in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol 1. New York: Vintage.

Tuesday, 1/26 Sexuality: Discourse, Power, and Knowledge

Foucault, Michel. 1990. "The Incitement to Discourse." Pp 17-35 in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol 1. New York: Vintage.

———. "Domain." Pp 103-114 in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol 1. New York: Vintage.

Thursday, 1/28 Critiques of the Social Construction of Sexuality

Vance, Carole S. 1998. "Social Construction Theory: Problems in the History of Sexuality." Pp 160-170 in *Social Perspectives in Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Reader*, edited by Peter M. Nardi and Beth E. Schneider. New York: Routledge.

Tuesday, 2/2 Queer Theory Meets Sociology

McCann, Hannah and Whitney Monaghan. 2020. "Defining Queer Theory." Pp 1-21 in *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures*. London: Red Globe Press.

———. "Theory Meets Identity." Pp 153-178 in *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures*. London: Red Globe Press.

Thursday, 2/4 **Queering Sociology**

Ingraham, Chrys. 1994. "The Heterosexual Imaginary: Feminist Sociology and Theories of Gender." *Sociological Theory* 12(2): 203-219.

Namaste, Ki. 1994. "The Politics of Inside/Out: Queer Theory, Poststructuralism, and a Sociological Approach to Sexuality." *Sociological Theory* 12(2): 220-231.

Week Four: Constructing Sexual Identities

Tuesday, 2/9 **Constructing the Homosexual**

Weeks, Jeffrey. 1996. "The Construction of Homosexuality." Pp 41-63 in *Queer Theory/Sociology*, edited by Steven Seidman. Cambridge, MA: Blackwell Publishers, Inc.

Thursday, 2/11 **Constructing the Heterosexual**

Ghaziani, Amin. 2017. "Heterosexualities." Pp 86-127 in *Sex Cultures*. Malden, MA: Polity.

Weeks Five-Seven: Not Gay: Sex Between Straight White Men

Tuesday, 2/16 **Homosexual Contact in Straight White Men's Culture**
READING RESPONSE 1 DUE

Jane Ward: Chapter 1: Nowhere Without It: The Homosexual Ingredient in the Making of Straight White Men in *Not Gay: Sex Between Straight White Men*

Thursday, 2/18 **A History of "Not-Gay" Sex**

Jane Ward: Chapter 2: Bars, Bikers, and Bathrooms: A Century of Not-Gay Sex in *Not Gay*

Somerville, Siobhan B. 2000. "Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body." Pp 15-38 in *Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Tuesday, 2/23 Heteroflexibility

Jane Ward: Chapter 3: Here's How You Know You're Not Gay: The Popular Science of Heterosexual Fluidity in *Not Gay*

Thursday, 2/25 Homosexual Contact and Heterosexual Authenticity

Jane Ward: Chapter 4: Average Dudes, Casual Encounters: White Homosociality and Heterosexual Authenticity in *Not Gay*

McCune Jr, Jeffrey Q. 2008. "'Out' in the Club: The Down Low, Hip-Hop, and the Architecture of Black Masculinity." *Text and Performance Quarterly* 28 (3): 298-314.

Tuesday, 3/2 Homosocial Hazing

Jane Ward: Chapter 5: Haze Him! White Masculinity, Anal Resilience, and the Erotic Spectacle of Repulsion in *Not Gay*

Thursday, 3/4 Heterosexual Constructions of Queerness

Jane Ward: Chapter 6: Against Gay Love: This One Goes Out to the Queers in *Not Gay*

Week Eight: (De)Constructing Sexual Identities

Tuesday, 3/9 Constructing New Identities: Asexuality

Przybylo, Ela. 2016. "Introducing Asexuality, Unthinking Sex." Pp 181-191 in *Introducing the New Sexuality Studies, Third Edition* edited by Nancy L. Fisher and Steven Seidman. New York: Routledge.

Scherrer, Kristin S. 2008. "Coming to an Asexual Identity: Negotiating Identity, Negotiating Desire." *Sexualities* 11 (5):621-641.

Thursday, 3/11 **Constructing New Identities: Polysexualities and Language**

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.

Klesse, Christian. 2006. "Polyamory and its 'Others': Contesting the Terms of Non-Monogamy." *Sexualities* 9 (5):565-583.

Week Nine: Midterm

Tuesday, 3/16 **Review/Catch Up**

Thursday, 3/18 **TAKE HOME MIDTERM**
NO CLASS

Week Ten: Spring Break

Tuesday, 3/23 + Thursday, 3/25 **NO CLASS**

Weeks Eleven-Twelve: (De)Constructing Sexuality

Tuesday, 3/30 **Negotiating Multiple Identities: Trans Genders, Sexualities, and the Creation of a Category**

Valentine, David. 2007. "'I Know What I Am': Gender, Sexuality, and Identity." Pp 105-137 in *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Thursday, 4/1 **Negotiating (Trans) Gender and Intimate Relations**

Pfeffer, Carla A. 2017. "Partners Negotiating Bodies, Sexuality, and Intimacy." *Queering Families: The Postmodern Partnerships of Cisgender Women and Transgender Men*. New York: Oxford University Press. DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199908059.001.0001.

Tuesday, 4/6 (Re)Defining Sexuality: BDSM and Consent

Fanghanel, Alexandra. 2019. "Asking For It: BDSM Sexual Practice and the Trouble of Consent." *Sexualities* 3 (4):1-18.

Thursday, 4/8 (Re)Defining Sexuality: BDSM and Taboo

Cruz, Ariane. 2016. "Chapter 1: The Dark Side of Desire: Racial-Sexual Alterity and the Play of Race." Pp 29-73 in *The Color of Kink: Black Women, BDSM, and Pornography*. New York: New York University Press.

Weeks Thirteen-Fifteen: Activism, Culture, and Porn

Tuesday, 4/13 Women Making Pornography

Penley, Constance et al. 2013. "Introduction: The Politics of Producing Pleasure" Pp 9-20 in *The Feminist Porn Book: The Politics of Producing Pleasure*. New York: The Feminist Press.

Betty Dodson: "Porn Wars." Pp 23-31 in *The Feminist Porn Book*

Bakehorn, Jill A. 2010. "Women-Made Pornography" Pp 91-111 in *Sex for Sale: Prostitution, Pornography and the Sex Industry*, 2nd edition, edited by Ronald Weitzer. New York: Routledge.

Thursday, 4/15 In Their Own Words: Feminist Pornographers

Tristan Taormino: "Calling the Shots: Feminist Porn in Theory and Practice" Pp 255-264 in *The Feminist Porn Book*

Dylan Ryan: "Fucking Feminism" Pp 121-129 in *The Feminist Porn Book*

April Flores: "Being Fatty D: Size, Beauty, and Embodiment in the Adult Industry" Pp 279-283 in *The Feminist Porn Book*

Loree Erickson: "Out of Line: The Sexy Femmegimp Politics of Flaunting It!" Pp 320-328 in *The Feminist Porn Book*

Tuesday, 4/20

Genderqueer/ Trans* Activism & Subjectivity in Porn
READING RESPONSE 2 DUE

Jiz Lee: "Uncategorized: Genderqueer Identity and Performance in Independent and Mainstream Porn" Pp 273-278 in *The Feminist Porn Book*

Buck Angel: "The Power of My Vagina" Pp 284-286 in *The Feminist Porn Book*

Tobi Hill-Meyer: "Where the Trans Women Aren't: The Slow Inclusion of Trans Women in Feminist and Queer Porn" Pp 155-163 in *Feminist Porn Book*

Thursday, 4/22

Resisting Anti-Blackness in Porn

Ariane Cruz: "Pornography: A Black Feminist Woman Scholar's Reconciliation" Pp 215-227 in *The Feminist Porn Book*

Mireille Miller-Young: "Interventions: The Deviant and Defiant Art of Black Women Porn Directors" Pp 105-120 in *The Feminist Porn Book*

Sinamon Love: "A Question of Feminism" Pp 97-104 in *The Feminist Porn Book*

Tuesday, 4/27

Constructing Authentic Sexuality?

Young, Madison. 2014. "Authenticity and its Role within Feminist Pornography." *Porn Studies* 1 (1-2):186-188.

Bakehorn, Jill. 2016. "Making Politics Explicit: Depicting Authenticity in Women-Made Pornography." Pp 456-467 in *Introducing the New Sexuality Studies, Third Edition* edited by Nancy L. Fisher and Steven Seidman. New York: Routledge.

Thursday, 4/29

Review/Wrap up Semester

Week Sixteen: Reading, Review, and Recitation

Monday, May 3—Friday, May 7

Final Exam: Due Wednesday, May 12 at 2:30pm