

Sociology 135: Sexual Cultures

Fall 2023

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Office Hours: Tues 3-4pm & Thurs 8:30-9:30am on Zoom;
Wednesdays 12:30-1:30pm in person

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

CLASS MEETING Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays 9:00-9:59am
159 Mulford

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 have definitions of sexuality changed over time? What implications does this have for people’s lives?
- ❖ What is queer theory and what challenges does it pose to common-sense understandings of sexuality and identity?

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. **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.** Sociology is built upon empirical data, not opinions. 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 if you are unclear about the *sociological perspective*, please refer to an introductory sociology text for a refresher.)

This course challenges many taken-for-granted assumptions about sexuality. We will be speaking frankly about issues of race, class, gender, and sexuality. Some topics may be challenging; **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.

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 have an open mind, be ready to have your understanding deepened, and demonstrate an understanding of the sociological perspective.

Course Goals

- ❖ Move beyond understanding sexuality as “natural”
- ❖ Use a social constructionist approach
- ❖ 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 own experiences
- ❖ Use an intersectional approach
- ❖ 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.

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.

The books are available as a PDF on bCourses

Course Reader: Individual files are available digitally on bCourses and a bound reader is available from [Copy Central](#).

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 get the opportunity 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).

Weekly Memos: These assignments are designed to keep you motivated and engaged with the course and to provide opportunities for you to check your comprehension in preparation for the graded assignments. Assignments will be due on Mondays at 11:59pm (exceptions made for Monday holidays-the due date will be Tuesday).

These assignments give you a space to practice the skills you will later be graded on.

Complete 10 of the 12 assignments in order to get full credit (the lowest two scores will be dropped). **Please note that these submissions are graded for completion, not proficiency.**

Grade Breakdown

Reading Responses (30%)
Midterm (25%)
Final Exam (30%)
Weekly Memos (15%)

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."**

Course Format and Policies

Readings

Complete readings prior to class to better prepare you to participate in class discussions and complete assignments. You will get a lot more out of lecture if you come prepared and I am happy to answer any questions you have.

Email

Please put the class number/name in the subject of the email. I endeavor to respond to emails within 24 hours, but this is not always possible; please be patient. Please note that **I will respond to emails during normal business hours.**

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.

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

Grading Policies

Extensions

Extensions are provided for those with this accommodation from DSP. Please contact me to discuss extensions and we will agree on a new due date.

Grace Period

My priority for this class, and the focus of my assessment of your work, is **learning**. Due dates are a practical necessity for many reasons, but life sometimes prevents us from meeting all of our obligations on time. **Every assignment has a set due date with a grace period of 5 days. You will be able to submit your assignment within that 5 day window without penalty and without requesting an extension.** After that grace period, assignments will not be accepted without prior approval.

You should plan to get your assignments in by the due date and reserve the grace period for those times when you really need it. It can be easy to start to think of the grace period deadline as the *real* due date which could get you into trouble if something comes up that prevents you from completing the assignment. Focus on the due date as the goal but with the comfort of knowing that should something unexpected happen, you have some breathing room to turn in your assignment.

TurnItIn

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.

Re-Grades

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.

****Note that re-grades are likely not possible on final exams due to the tight grading timeline and university grade reporting deadlines.**

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 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.

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. I am happy to help.

Office Hours

Please see Page 1 or [this link](#) for information about my office hours. These office hours are specifically for you. We can discuss readings, assignments, post-college plans, existential dread, how to access resources, letters of recommendation, any issues you are having, what is bringing you joy, whatever.

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: [Survivor Support](#). **Please note that I am not a confidential advocate; I am a mandated reporter.** You can speak to a [Confidential Care Advocate](#) at the Path to Care Center.

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](#).

Mental Health Resources

All students — regardless of background or identity — may experience a range of issues that can become barriers to learning like strained relationships, anxiety, depression, alcohol and other drug problems, difficulties with concentration, sleep, and eating, and/ or lack of motivation. UC Berkeley offers many services like [Recalibrate](#) and [Student Mental Health](#).

Course Outline

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

Week One: Introductions

Wednesday, 8/23 **Welcome + Introductions**

Friday, 8/25 **Introducing the Sociology of Sexuality**

Weeks Two-Four: Constructing Sexuality & Queer Theory

Monday, 8/28 **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.

Wednesday, 8/30 + **Sexuality: Discourse, Power, and Knowledge**
Friday, 9/1

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

———. "The Repressive Hypothesis Part 2: The Perverse Implantation." Pp 36-49 in *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*. Vol 1. New York: Vintage.

Monday, 9/4 **Holiday: NO CLASS**

Wednesday, 9/6 **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.

Friday, 9/8

Queer Theory

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.

**Monday, 9/11 +
Wednesday, 9/13**

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.

Friday, 9/15

Queering Discourse

Forstie, Clare. 2020. "Disappearing Dykes? Post-Lesbian Discourse and Shifting Identities and Communities." *Journal of Homosexuality* 67(12):1760-1778.

Week Five: Constructing Sexual Identities

**Monday, 9/18 +
Wednesday, 9/20**

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.

Friday, 9/22

Constructing the Heterosexual

READING RESPONSE 1 DUE

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

Weeks Six-Eight: Not Gay: Sex Between Straight White Men

Monday, 9/25 Homosexual Contact in Straight White Men's Culture

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*

Wednesday, 9/27 + A History of "Not-Gay" Sex Friday, 9/29

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.

Monday, 10/2 + Heteroflexibility Wednesday, 10/4

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

Friday, 10/6 + Homosexual Contact and Heterosexual Authenticity Monday, 10/9

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

Winder, Terrell J.A. 2023. "The Discursive Work of 'Bottom-Shaming': Sexual Positioning Discourse in the Construction of Black Masculinity." *Gender & Society*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432231186999>

Wednesday, 10/11 Homosocial Hazing

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

Friday, 10/13 Heterosexual Constructions of Queerness

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

Week Nine: Midterm

Monday, 10/16 Review/Catch Up

Wednesday, 10/18 Work on Midterm—NO CLASS

Friday, 10/20 MIDTERM DUE —NO CLASS

Weeks Ten-Eleven: (De)Constructing Sexual Identities

Monday, 10/23 + Constructing New Identities: Asexuality
Wednesday, 10/25

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.

Friday, 10/27 Constructing New Identities: Polyamory 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.

**Monday, 10/30 +
Wednesday, 11/1** **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.

Friday, 11/3 **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.

Weeks Twelve-Fifteen: Activism, Culture, and Porn

**Monday, 11/6 +
Wednesday, 11/8** **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*

Friday, 11/10 **Holiday: NO CLASS**

**Monday, 11/13 +
Wednesday, 11/15** **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*

Friday, 11/17 **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*

Monday, 11/20 **Mental Health Day: NO CLASS**

Wednesday, 11/22 **HOLIDAY: NO CLASS**

Friday, 11/24 **HOLIDAY: NO CLASS**

Monday, 11/27 **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*

Wednesday, 11/29 + **Constructing Authentic Sexuality?**
Friday, 12/1 **Review/Wrap up Semester**

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.

Week Sixteen: Reading, Review, and Recitation

Monday, December 4—Friday, December 8

FINAL EXAM: Due Thursday, 12/14 at 10pm

UC Berkeley sits on the territory of xučyun (Huichin), the ancestral and unceded land of the Chochenyo speaking Ohlone people, the successors of the sovereign Verona Band of Alameda County. This land was and continues to be of great importance to the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and other familial descendants of the Verona Band. We recognize that every member of the Berkeley community has benefitted, and continues to benefit, from the use and occupation of this land since the institution's founding in 1868. Consistent with our values of community, inclusion and diversity, we have a responsibility to acknowledge and make visible the university's relationship to Native peoples. As members of the Berkeley community, it is vitally important that we not only recognize the history of the land on which we stand, but also, we recognize that the Muwekma Ohlone people are alive and flourishing members of the Berkeley and broader Bay Area communities today.

**This acknowledgement was co-created with the Muwekma Ohlone Tribe and Native American Student Development*