History Research Seminar: Gender and Sexuality

Rutgers-Newark Fall 2022
26:510:600/26:050:502:01
Wednesday, 5:30-8:10 pm
Conklin Hall, room 447

Professor: Whitney Strub
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Office hours: Wednesdays 4-5pm and available most afternoons so just email and we’ll set it up!

Course Description
What is the relationship between sexuality/gender and power, and how do we as historians show this in action? This course uses gender and sexuality as a lens for thinking methodologically about historical research and practice. As such, we will be very engaged with the history of sexuality and gender in the modern United States, but even more so, the historiography of those areas. Our focal point will be recent scholarly journal articles, which we will read for content but also form, method, style, and structure at the cutting edge of the field—that is, as models for your own independent research projects that will comprise the major outcome of the course.

Students are encouraged to apply these themes toward whatever most interests you for your research paper—some possibilities include the 1910s “white slavery” panic; sex work; obscenity and pornography; LGBTQ history and movements; feminist activism; the sexual and gender politics of Black Power, neoliberalism, immigration, or cultural texts; or any other relevant topic related to our broader umbrella themes. Key to shaping this will be locating accessible archives to form the base of a fresh research project.

Requirements
Attendance and Participation (25%): As a graduate seminar, the expectation here is that you will not miss class, and that during our meetings you will contribute in the spirit of participatory citizenship, which is to say, substantively but not overbearingly. If you have questions about this framework, please ask.

More than four absences for any reason will result in a loss of credit for the course. Only documented emergencies and medical occasions, or officially school-sanctioned activities, will qualify as excused absences.

If you plan to claim a religious holiday as an excused absence, you must inform me of this fact within the first two weeks of class.

Note: I realize we are living in unprecedented and uncertain times, and that pandemic realities might affect you, me, or all of us collectively (and that they have already affected many in our community). I intend to approach this and every policy in a spirit of goodwill and generosity—so, the policy is the official word, but I’ll work with anyone individually if and when things come up. Just get in touch and we can talk it through!

A question and a comment (10%): Each week you are required to post in a dedicated Canvas discussion thread one discussion question for class and one thoughtful observation about the week’s readings. This is not formal writing and you should not
summarize the readings but rather call attention to an aspect that caught your eye, offer a brief critique, praise for an element that struck you as particularly strong, etc. No need for this to be more than a short, casual paragraph.

Review essays (2—first 15%, second 20%): Each student will prepare two formal review essays on specific individual articles that we read, written in the form of peer reviews for a scholarly journal (c.1500 words). **Due dates: October 5, October 26**

Final Paper (30%): Each student will complete a 25-page historical research paper. There will be required intermediary steps (bibliography, outline, peer review, etc.). We’ll discuss and formalize this later in the semester, and I am open to suggestions and pitches. The final paper will be due by **Monday, December 19, by 9:20pm**.

**Learning Goals:**
1. Historical: students should emerge from this course with a deeper understanding of the history of sexuality and its interconnections with US histories of culture, class, race, gender, and nation;
2. Historiographical: students should also develop a more sophisticated understanding of how the history of sexuality as a field has taken shape, what its methods consist of, and what the current sites of analysis and focus are;
3. Research: students will develop experiential knowledge of archival research and how primary materials are put into dialogue with secondary sources to generate new scholarly knowledge;
4. Writing: students should develop their skills at writing in a scholarly register, growing more comfortable with composing work that reflects on and intervenes in ongoing scholarly discussions around sexuality and culture.

**Grading Guidelines for written work**
**A:** work of exceptional quality, showing profound and meaningful engagement with a rich selection of source material, thoughtful and comparative analysis, superior writing—and most importantly, containing a clear, inventive, and persuasive thesis.
**B:** work that is above average—shows knowledge and/or contains a thesis, but does not develop it as strongly as it could; sources strong but incomplete.
**C:** adequate work that fulfills the assignment—often based on summarizing rather than thesis or analysis.
**D:** subpar work that falls short of fulfilling the assignment but deserves some credit.
**F:** work that fails to earn credit for the assignment, including plagiarism.

Late assignments will not be accepted. Extensions may be negotiated under extenuating circumstances (which do not include computer-related issues—always back up your work!), with some grade deductions, before the due date. **No incompletes** will be granted unless the matter has been discussed with me in advance.

**Policy on Academic Integrity (Cheating and Plagiarism)**
You are expected to be familiar with and adhere to the Academic Integrity Policy, available at [http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu](http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu). **All students are required to sign the Rutgers Honor Code Pledge.**
Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Any use of the ideas or words of another person without proper acknowledgment of credit will result in penalties up to and including a course
grade of F and referral to the academic integrity board. I aspire to be your ally and supporter in all possible ways, but on matters of plagiarism, expect no sympathy. Cases will be handled in a draconian manner, and excuses will not be entertained. Note that the uncited usage of uncopyrighted material such as Wikipedia entries still constitutes plagiarism.

**Students with Disabilities notice:**
Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. In order to receive consideration for reasonable accommodations, a student with a disability must contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where you are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines. If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus’ disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form on the ODS web site at: https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/registration-form. For more information please contact the Office of Disability Services in the Paul Robeson Campus Center, in suite 219, by phone at 973-353-5375 or by email at odsnewark@newark.rutgers.edu.

**Policy on Classroom Conduct**
Video or audio recording of the instructor or other students is not permitted and constitutes a violation of the Rutgers University Code of Student Conduct.

In class discussions, I expect universally respectful interactions. In examining our texts, there may be differing perspectives, disagreements, and debates. This is fine; through such dialogue comes greater understanding. When challenging someone else’s perspective, though, refrain from personal attacks or blistering scorn. If someone makes what you consider an offensive or disrespectful comment, note that this does not absolve you of adhering to the iron-clad rule of respect in responding to it. If the instructor tells you to stop speaking, you must stop speaking.

**Policy on Office Hours**
My office hours are for you. Stop by with any questions you have about assignments, readings, classroom discussions, other pertinent topics, or just drop by to say hello. The only thing I discourage is visiting to cover material from a missed class; for that, consult fellow classmates. All else is warmly welcomed. I’m flexible on timing as long as it’s after noon, so we can set up an appointment at a mutually agreeable time.

**Content notice**
Some of the material in this course will deal with charged issues of race, class, and sexuality, and some material might include coarse language, scenes of violence (including at times rape and sexual assault), and depictions of sexuality. I will try to alert you to anything that might be potentially upsetting in advance, but know that throughout, the course features adult content. If you are concerned about specific triggers, please speak with me early, and I will work with you as best I can.
FINALLY: A NOTE ON THE PANDEMIC: We live in uncertain times. I respect everyone’s different and complicated feelings about all of this, but I expect complete adherence to Rutgers policy on things like masking. I will stop class and/or ask you to leave if necessary for anyone who refuses to follow policy, out of respect for your fellow students. We’ll run this class as though things were normal, though I know they are not and will work with you and help as best I can if you find yourself impacted by the pandemic. We’ll all do our best—as the Rutgers community has done for two years now!

Tentative syllabus of readings:
(Note: for anyone seeking a comprehensive overview of the US history of sexuality, I strongly recommend Estelle Freedman’s and John D’Emilio’s Intimate Matters, a foundational text that covers the pre-contact era through the 21st century. If there were two more weeks in a semester, we’d begin with it!)

Week 1: Wed. 9/7: Introductions; syllabus; discussion: historiography, archives, methods

Week 2: Wed 9/14


Week 3: Wed 9/21
No class—for this week, you choose 4-5 articles in scholarly journals and post about them on Canvas. Also individual meetings with professor.

Week 4: Wed 9/28


**Week 5: Wed 10/5**


**Week 6: Wed 10/12**


**Week 7: Wed 10/19**

Wiesner, Caitlin Reed. ""The First Thing We Cry About is Violence": The National Black Women's Health Project and the Fight Against Rape and Battering." *Journal of Women's History* 34.1 (2022): 71-92.


From this point, we will shift into individual research. We won’t meet every week as a class, but we will rarely go more than two weeks without convening for drafts/feedback/sharing updates—precise schedule to be determined with class input.

Thanksgiving Recess 11/24/22 - 11/27/22
Regular Classes End 12/14/22
**Final paper due: Monday, December 19, by 9:20pm**

**Additional reading (articles that couldn’t be squeezed onto syllabus):**


