

SEXUALITY AND AMERICAN CULTURE

Rutgers-Newark Spring 2022
26:510:534:01 / 26:050:521:04
Tuesday, 5:30-8:10 pm
Engelhard 211

Professor: Whitney Strub
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Office hours: Tuesdays 3-4pm and available most afternoons so just email and we'll set it up! Office hours will be on Zoom at the start of the semester but will migrate to in-person, possibly outside, depending on weather and regional health outcomes as the semester progresses.

Course Description

This course examines sexuality, culture, and the ways they have interacted as both reflections and constitutive elements of social power in the United States. Our readings will proceed chronologically, from the colonial period through the twenty-first century, and our discussions will also be methodological in nature, focusing on the techniques and theoretical frameworks through which cultural historians and historians of sexuality have approached these issues in their work. As a reading seminar, assignments will come in the form of historiographical essays and analytical book reviews.

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.

Annotated bibliographies (15%): For most class meetings, one person (or a small team, depending on enrollment) will introduce the week's topic by preparing a short annotated bibliography situating it in the context of other related scholarship. The bibliography should contain 5-6 entries (or more proportional to number of group members), with a short paragraph summarizing, discussing, and assessing each entry as it pertains to the topic. The point here is to collectively compile a larger historiographical sense of the field.

Book Review/Peer Review (20%): Each student will prepare one critical/analytical review essay of an assigned book or article, written as if for a scholarly journal (c.1500 words). Due date: March 8.

Final Paper (30%): Each student will complete a 15-page historiographical paper, which can take one of multiple forms, depending on where this course fits into your individual trajectory and interests. We'll discuss and formalize this later in the semester, and I am open to suggestions and pitches. This paper will be due by Tuesday, May 10, 9pm.

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. 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>. **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. Returning to the classroom after so long on Zoom is exciting but might also be a source of stress and anxiety, particularly for those who have been directly impacted the most by the pandemic. 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!

Required texts (in order of reading)

Most readings are scholarly journal articles, available through Rutgers University Library databases or the course Canvas page. The books we will read are:

George Chauncey, *Gay New York: gender, urban culture, and the making of the gay male world, 1890-1940* (New York, 1993)

Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York, 1988)

Jules Gill-Peterson, *Histories of the Transgender Child* (Minnesota, 2018)

Whitney Strub, *Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right* (New York, 2011)

Lorna Bracewell, *Why We Lost the Sex Wars* (Minnesota, 2021)

Mireille Miller-Young, *A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women in Pornography* (Duke, 2014)

Tentative syllabus of readings (subject to change, with advance notice)

Week 1 (January 18): Introduction

Week 2 (Jan 25): Early America

Deborah A. Miranda, "Extermination of the Joyas: Gendercide in Spanish California," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16.1-2 (2010): 253-284.

Sharon Block, "The Crime of Rape: Transatlantic Standards, American Racialization, and Local Judgment," ch.4 of *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (North Carolina, 2006) (on Canvas)

Richard Godbeer, "'The Cry of Sodom': Discourse, Intercourse, and Desire in Colonial New England," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 52.2 (1995): 259-286.

Clare A. Lyons, "Mapping an Atlantic sexual culture: Homoeroticism in eighteenth-century Philadelphia," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 60.1 (2003): 119-154.

Week 3 (February 1): Slavery

Brenda E. Stevenson, "What's Love Got to Do with It? Concubinage and Enslaved Women and Girls in the Antebellum South," in *Sexuality and Slavery: Reclaiming*

Intimate Histories in the Americas, eds. Daina Ramey Berry and Leslie M. Harris (Georgia, 2018) (Canvas)

Stephanie Jones-Rogers, "Rethinking Sexual Violence and the Marketplace of Slavery: White Women, the Slave Market, and Enslaved People's Sexualized Bodies in the Nineteenth-Century South," *Sexuality and Slavery* (Canvas)

Thomas Foster, "The sexual abuse of Black men under American slavery," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20.3 (2011): 445-464.

Aliyyah Abdur-Rahman, "'The Strangest Freaks of Despotism': Queer Sexuality in Antebellum African American Slave Narrative," *African American Review* 40.2 (2006): 223-37.

Week 4 (Feb. 8): The Victorian Era?

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "The female world of love and ritual: Relations between women in nineteenth-century America," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 1.1 (1975): 1-29.

April Haynes, "The trials of Frederick Hollick: Obscenity, sex education, and medical democracy in the Antebellum United States," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 12.4 (2003): 543-574.

Leslie M. Harris, "From Abolitionist Amalgamators to 'Rulers of the Five Points': The Discourse of Interracial Sex and Reform in Antebellum New York City," in Martha Hodes, ed., *Sex, Love, Race: Crossing Boundaries in North American History* (New York, 1999) (Canvas)

Andrea Tone, "Black Market Birth Control: Contraceptive Entrepreneurship and Criminality in the Gilded Age," *The Journal of American History* 87.2 (2000): 435-459.

Week 5 (Feb. 15) "White Slavery" (and Its Discontents)

Mara Keire, "The vice trust: A reinterpretation of the White slavery scare in the United States, 1907-1917," *Journal of Social History* 35.1 (2001): 5-41 (note: you can read just the introduction to this article)

Janet Staiger, *Bad Women: Regulating Sexuality in Early American Cinema*, pp.116-146 (Canvas)

Grace Peña Delgado, "Border control and sexual policing: White slavery and prostitution along the US-Mexico Borderlands, 1903-1910," *Western Historical Quarterly* 43.2 (2012): 157-178.

Mary Ting Yi Lui, "Saving young girls from Chinatown: white slavery and woman suffrage, 1910-1920," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18.3 (2009): 393-417.

LaShawn Harris, "'I Have My Own Room on 139th Street': Black Women and the Urban Sex Economy, Chapter 4 of *Sex Workers, Psychics, and Numbers Runners: Black Women in New York City's Underground Economy* (Illinois, 2016)

The Traffic in Souls (1913), via Rutgers University Library

Week 6 (Feb. 22): Queer Community-formation

George Chauncey, *Gay New York: gender, urban culture, and the making of the gay male world, 1890-1940* (New York, 1993)

Week 7 (March 1): Cold War Sexuality

Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York, 1988)

Week 8 (March 8): Transgender Histories

Jules Gill-Peterson, *Histories of the Transgender Child* (Minnesota, 2018)

* Review essay due

Break (March 15)

Week 9 (March 22): New Right Sexual Politics

Whitney Strub, *Perversion for Profit: The Politics of Pornography and the Rise of the New Right* (New York, 2011)

Week 10 (March 30): Sexuality and Radical Politics

Amy Abugo Ongiri, "Prisoner of love: Affiliation, sexuality, and the Black Panther Party," *The Journal of African American History* 94.1 (2009): 69-86.

Samuel Galen Ng, "Trans Power! Sylvia Lee Rivera's STAR and the Black Panther Party," *Left History* 17.1 (2013): 11-41

Terence Kissack, "Freaking Fag Revolutionaries: New York's Gay Liberation Front, 1969-1971," *Radical History Review* 62 (1995): 105-134

Susana Peña, "Gender and sexuality in Latina/o Miami: Documenting Latina transsexual activists," *Gender & History* 22.3 (2010): 755-772

Week 11 (April 5): Feminist Sex Wars

Lorna Bracewell, *Why We Lost the Sex Wars* (Minnesota, 2021)

Week 12 (April 12): Black feminism, Pornography, and Sex Work

Mireille Miller-Young, *A Taste for Brown Sugar: Black Women in Pornography* (Duke, 2014)

Week 13 (April 19): Queer Newark

Zenzele Isoke, "Can't I be seen? Can't I be heard? Black women queering politics in Newark," *Gender, Place & Culture* 21.3 (2014): 353-369

Darnell Moore, Beryl Satter, Timothy Stewart-Winter, and Whitney Strub, "A Community's Response to the Problem of Invisibility: The Queer Newark Oral History Project," *QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking* 1.2 (2014): 1-14

Yamil Avivi, "Queering Political Economy in Neoliberal Ironbound Newark: Subjectivity and Spacemaking among Brazilian Queer Immigrant Men," *Diálogo* 18.2 (2015): 105-118

Kristyn Scorsone, "Invisible Pathways: Public History by Queer Black Women in Newark," *The Public Historian* 41.2 (2019): 190-217.

Listen to one Queer Newark oral history of your choice, at <https://queer.newark.rutgers.edu/interviews>

Week 14 (April 26)

To be determined collectively

Final paper due: Tuesday, May 10, 9pm

Additional Rutgers Information:

Accommodation and Support Statement

Rutgers University Newark (RU-N) is committed to the creation of an inclusive and safe learning environment for all students and the University as a whole. RU-N has identified the following resources to further the mission of access and support:

For Individuals with Disabilities: The Office of Disability Services (ODS) is responsible for the determination of appropriate accommodations for students who encounter barriers due to disability. Once a student has completed the ODS process (registration, initial appointment, and submitted documentation) and reasonable accommodations are determined to be necessary and appropriate, a Letter of Accommodation (LOA) will be provided. The LOA must be given to each course instructor by the student and followed up with a discussion. This should be done as early in the semester as possible as accommodations are not retroactive. More information can be found at ods.rutgers.edu. Contact ODS at (973)353-5375 or via email at ods@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals who are Pregnant: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance is available to assist with any concerns or potential accommodations related to pregnancy. Students may contact the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance at (973) 353-1906 or via email at TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Absence Verification: The Office of the Dean of Students can provide assistance for absences related to religious observance, emergency or unavoidable conflict (e.g.,

illness, personal or family emergency, etc.). Students should refer to [University Policy 10.2.7](#) for information about expectations and responsibilities. The Office of the Dean of Students can be contacted by calling (973) 353-5063 or emailing deanofstudents@newark.rutgers.edu.

For Individuals with temporary conditions/injuries: The Office of the Dean of Students can assist students who are experiencing a temporary condition or injury (e.g., broken or sprained limbs, concussions, or recovery from surgery). Students experiencing a temporary condition or injury should submit a request using the following link: <https://temporaryconditions.rutgers.edu>.

For English as a Second Language (ESL): The Program in American Language Studies (PALS) can support students experiencing difficulty in courses due to English as a Second Language (ESL) and can be reached by emailing PALS@newark.rutgers.edu to discuss potential supports.

For Gender or Sex-Based Discrimination or Harassment: The Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance can assist students who are experiencing any form of gender or sex-based discrimination or harassment, including sexual assault, sexual harassment, relationship violence, or stalking. Students can report an incident to the Office of Title IX and ADA Compliance by calling (973) 353-1906 or emailing TitleIX@newark.rutgers.edu. Incidents may also be reported by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNReportingForm. For more information, students should refer to the University's Student Policy Prohibiting Sexual Harassment, Sexual Violence, Relationship Violence, Stalking and Related Misconduct located at <http://compliance.rutgers.edu/title-ix/about-title-ix/title-ix-policies/>.

For support related to interpersonal violence: The Office for Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance can provide any student with confidential support. The office is a **confidential resource** and does *not* have an obligation to report information to the University's Title IX Coordinator. Students can contact the office by calling (973) 353-1918 or emailing run.vpva@rutgers.edu. There is also a confidential text-based line available to students; students can text (973) 339-0734 for support.

For Crisis and Concerns: The Campus Awareness Response and Education (CARE) Team works with students in crisis to develop a support plan to address personal situations that might impact their academic performance. Students, faculty and staff may contact the CARE Team by using the following link: tinyurl.com/RUNCARE or emailing careteam@rutgers.edu.

For Stress, Worry, or Concerns about Well-being: The Counseling Center has confidential therapists available to support students. Students should reach out to the Counseling Center to schedule an appointment: counseling@newark.rutgers.edu or (973) 353-5805. If you are not quite ready to make an appointment with a therapist but are interested in self-help, check out *TAO at Rutgers-Newark* for an easy, web-based approach to self-care and support: <https://tinyurl.com/RUN-TAO>.

For emergencies, call 911 or contact Rutgers University Police Department (RUPD) by calling (973) 353-5111.

Lectures and materials utilized in this course, including but not limited to videocasts, podcasts, visual presentations, assessments, and assignments, are protected by United States copyright laws as well as Rutgers University policy. As the instructor of this course, I possess sole copyright ownership. You are permitted to take notes for personal use or to provide to a classmate also currently enrolled in this course. Under no other circumstances is distribution of recorded or written materials associated with this course permitted to any internet site or similar information-sharing platform without my express written consent. Doing so is a violation of the university's [Academic Integrity Policy](#).

Similarly, these copyright protections extend to original papers you produce for this course. In the event that I seek to share your work further, I will first obtain your written consent to do so. Finally, as the instructor for this course, I have the responsibility to protect students' right to privacy. Classroom recordings of students will therefore be treated as educational records under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), the U.S. federal law that governs access to educational information and records. Instructors and students must provide notification if any part of online sessions are to be recorded, and such recordings cannot be circulated outside the course.