

## **Seminar: Gender and Sexuality in United States History**

Rutgers, Newark: Fall 2014

21:510:490, section 1

Tuesday 2:30-5:20

Conklin 447

Professor: Whitney Strub

Office: Conklin 243 (in the Women's & Gender Studies office)

Office hours: 11am-12:30pm Tuesday and by appointment

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### **Course description:**

This is a course with a double agenda. First, we will examine the role of gender and sexuality in U.S. history, from the colonial era through the early 21<sup>st</sup> century. Additionally, we will use our explorations as a launching pad to think methodologically about how history, as a discipline, is done. Our goals, then, are to expand student knowledge of the history of sexuality and gender, and also to make you, as citizens of the course, into historians yourselves. It should be an exciting and intellectually engaging semester.

On the first front, we will read both secondary and primary sources (if you don't know what that distinction means, don't worry—we will discuss it extensively). Reading journal articles, chapters from books, and more, we will trace how prevailing notions of gender and sexuality changed over time and impacted U.S. history. Issues will include sexual regulation and resistance, LGBT history and activism, feminism, abortion, obscenity and pornography, and more.

In terms of becoming historians, you will read these sources partly for the stories and analysis they offer, but also for *how* they go about it. How do historians use sources? Where do they even find them to begin with? What goes into making historical arguments and analyses? These are the sort of questions that prod us to move beyond just *reading* history, and toward *producing* it. This aspect of the course is intended to set you up for the capstone research project of the spring semester.

Note: This course does **not** assume previous knowledge in the history of sexuality or other related fields. It does assume a broad familiarity with U.S. history, but I am happy to offer supplementary readings for anyone who might benefit from them, and class discussions will provide much opportunity for situating things historically.

### **Course Requirements:**

**Attendance and Punctuality:** You are expected to attend every class, from start to finish. Attendance is mandatory. Your overall course grade will be lowered by one half letter for each unexcused absence beginning with the third one. More than five 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.

**Class Participation.** All students are required to participate in the discussions during class. As a seminar course, it is the members of the class who carry the discussion—so you must arrive at class having completed that day’s reading assignment and prepared to talk about it. A valuable part of discussions is the posing of questions; no one is expected to grasp perfectly the significance of all the readings. Intelligent questions are just as important as comments. Your participation grade will reflect not merely the frequency of your participation but rather the *quality* of your comments and questions (or rephrased: please make substantive contributions to class discussion, but don’t talk just to talk). Along with participation, your **citizenship** is a formal component of this course—you are expected to be a positive, productive participant who engages with your peers in constructive ways.

At the end of the semester you will present your research project to the class, and this will factor into your participation grade.

**Quizzes:** There will be periodic short quizzes and writing assignments on the readings assigned. Missed quizzes cannot be made up. These will be very simple for everyone who has done the readings.

**Short Writings:** You will write multiple short pieces over the course of the semester. These will be largely informal, where the quality of thought that goes into them is more important than the polish of the prose.

**Short Formal Essay:** You will write one short formal review essay, offering a critique and analysis of one of our class readings. I will deliver a handout on this early in the semester.

**Primary Source Presentation.** Each student will be assigned to a pair (or group) to present to your classmates a primary source related to the readings for a given week. You will “assign” the text a week in advance, introduce it to the class at our meeting, and lead a short discussion of it in class.

**Research Proposal:** Because this course is essentially in preparation for the capstone research project in the spring, it will culminate in the devising of a formal research proposal that sets up that project. This will be a formal proposal involving a brief narrative, general outline, bibliography, and methodological essay. There will also be formal stepping stones to the proposal, which I will outline in a separate handout.

**Grading Breakdown:** Quizzes 10%  
Participation/Class citizenship 20%  
Short writings 10%  
Short Formal Essay 20%  
Primary Source Presentation 10%  
Research Proposal 30%

**Required Texts:**

All assigned readings will be available online. For journal articles, you are expected to access and obtain them through the Rutgers University Library website (<http://www.libraries.rutgers.edu/>).

Anything unavailable through the Library will be posted as a pdf on the course Blackboard.

**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>.

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 possibly including a course grade of F. Likewise for cheating on exams; these are behaviors for which I have no sympathy, and should they occur, they will be handled in a suitably draconian manner. I will turn **all** instances of plagiarism over the university authorities.

Note that the uncited usage of uncopyrighted material such as Wikipedia entries still constitutes plagiarism.

**Policy on Disabilities**

**This course is open to all students who meet the academic requirements for participation.** Any student who has a need for accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability should contact the instructor privately to discuss the specific situation as soon as possible. Students should contact Assistant Dean Genevieve Sumski at (973) 353-5300 to certify documentation of disability and arrange for appropriate accommodations. Information can be found at <http://robeson.rutgers.edu/studentlife/disability.html>.

If navigating university bureaucracy is confusing, let me know and I will help in any way that I can.

**Policy on Classroom Courtesy**

Do not bring food, active cell phones, or other communications devices into the classroom. If you mistakenly do bring an active phone and it rings, silence it immediately; answering will constitute an egregious violation of this course's basic social contract. Texting in class will also result in drastic penalties to your total course grade.

In class discussions, I expect **universally** respectful interactions. We are taking on some controversial issues in this course, and 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.

Failure to abide by these rules may result in a lowered course grade, or removal from the classroom.

I will add here what some blogs call a "trigger warning": we will be dealing with potentially sexually explicit, blunt, and possibly offensive material at times, which may make some people uncomfortable. The basic premise of this course is that we are approaching this material in a scholarly fashion, as historians, and that this is a group of mature adults. That said, I will try to let you know in advance what to expect in regard to graphic and/or disturbing material, but you should also stay aware of the syllabus and let me know in advance if any of our material might pose a problem. I will work with you as best I can to make accommodations if needed.

### **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 period; for that, consult fellow classmates. All else is warmly welcomed. If your schedule conflicts with my office hours, we can set up an appointment at a mutually agreeable time.

Also, please note that this year I will be serving as program director of Women's & Gender Studies, so my main office will be in the WGS program at 245 Conklin. I also have a History office at 306 Conklin—I'm less likely to be there, but if you're looking for me and I'm not in WGS, feel free to give it a try.

### **Tentative Syllabus of Readings and Assignments**

#### **Week 1, Sept. 2**

Introductions

Syllabus

Group primary-source exercise

#### **Week 2, Sept. 9: Colonial Era**

\*Richard Godbeer, *Sexual Revolution in Early America* (selection on Blackboard)

\*Sharon Block, *Rape and Sexual Power in Early America* (selection on Blackboard)

\*"A Horrible Case of Bestiality" (Plymouth Colony, 1642, Blackboard)

\*"William Blackstone on Women in the Eyes of the Law" (1765, Blackboard)

#### **Week 3, Sept. 16: Toward "Repression"**

\*Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, "Victoria Woodhull, Anthony Comstock, and conflict over sex in the United States in the 1870s," *Journal of American History* 87.2 (2000): 403-434.

\*Anthony Comstock, *Traps for the Young* (1883; selection on Blackboard)

\*Michel Foucault, "The Repressive Hypothesis," *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1 (on Blackboard)

#### **Week 4, Sept. 23: The First Sexual Revolution?**

\*Kevin Mumford, *Interzones: Black/White Sex Districts in Chicago and New York in the Early Twentieth Century* (selection on Blackboard)

\*George Chauncey, "Christian brotherhood or sexual perversion? Homosexual identities and the construction of sexual boundaries in the World War One era." *Journal of Social History* 19.2 (1985): 189-211.

#### **Week 5, Sept. 30: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the 1920s and 1930s**

\*Mark Wild, "Red Light Kaleidoscope: Prostitution and Ethnoracial Relations in Los Angeles, 1880-1940," *Journal of Urban History* 28.6 (2002): 720-742

\*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

\*Cheryl Hicks, "Bright and Good Looking Colored Girl": Black Women's Sexuality and "Harmful Intimacy" in Early-Twentieth-Century New York" *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 18.3 (2009):418-456

#### **Week 6, Oct. 7: Cold War Sexual Politics—Frameworks**

\*Thaddeus Russell, "The color of discipline: Civil rights and black sexuality." *American Quarterly* 60.1 (2008): 101-128.

\*Margot Canaday, "Building a straight state: Sexuality and social citizenship under the 1944 GI Bill." *The Journal of American History* 90.3 (2003): 935-957.

#### **Week 7, Oct. 14: Cold War Sexual Politics—Obscenity and Pornography**

\*Andrea Friedman, "Sadists and Sissies: Anti-pornography Campaigns in Cold War America." *Gender & History* 15.2 (2003): 201-227.

\*Whitney Strub, "The Clearly Obscene and the Queerly Obscene: Heteronormativity and Obscenity in Cold War Los Angeles." *American Quarterly* 60.2 (2008): 373-398.

\*Fredric Wertham, *Seduction of the Innocent* (1954, selection on Blackboard)

\*Edsel Newton, "Report on Pornography" (1958, on Blackboard)

#### **Week 8, Oct. 21: Sexual Revolution**

\*Josh Sides, "Excavating the Postwar Sex District in San Francisco," *Journal of Urban History* 32.3 (2006): 355-379

\*Marc Stein, "Boutilier and the US Supreme Court's Sexual Revolution." *Law and History Review* 23.3 (2005): 491-536

\*Ana Raquel Minian, "'Indiscriminate and Shameless Sex': The Strategic Use of Sexuality by the United Farm Workers," *American Quarterly* 65.1 (2013): 63-90

#### **Week 9, Oct. 28: New Right**

\*Whitney Strub, "Perversion for Profit: Citizens for Decent Literature and the Arousal of an Antiporn Public in the 1960s." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 15.2 (2006): 258-291.

\*Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, "Antiabortion, antifeminism, and the rise of the New Right." *Feminist Studies* 7.2 (1981): 206-246.

**Week 10, Nov. 4: Gay Politics in the 1970s**

\*Kevin Mumford, "The Trouble with Gay Rights: Race and the Politics of Sexual Orientation in Philadelphia, 1969-1982," *Journal of American History* 98.1 (2011): 49-72

\*Gillian Frank, "'The Civil Rights of Parents': Race and Conservative Politics in Anita Bryant's Campaign against Gay Rights in 1970s Florida," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 22.1 (2013): 126-160

**Week 11, Nov. 11: Feminist Politics**

\*Anne Enke, "Smuggling Sex Through the Gates: Race, Sexuality, and the Politics of Space in Second Wave Feminism," *American Quarterly* 55.4 (2003): 635-667

\*Katherine Turk, "Out of the Revolution, into the Mainstream: Employment Activism in the NOW Sears Campaign and the Growing Pains of Liberal Feminism" *Journal of American History* 97.2 (2010)

**Week 12 Nov. 18: Individual meetings with professor**

**Week 13, Nov. 25: Not a class period because this Tuesday follows a Thursday schedule (followed by Thanksgiving Break)**

**Week 14 (Dec. 2) and Week 15 (Dec. 9): in-class presentation of work in progress**

**FINAL PROPOSAL DUE 2:45pm, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 18**