Course Description
In this course we will be examining sexuality and politics in the United States, with special emphasis on developments over the last twenty years and youth culture today. Throughout the course will pay particular attention to the construction and deconstruction of identity. Our texts will include feminist and queer theory, ethnographies, poetry, films, and works of historical and political analysis. This is a seminar course and offers the opportunity for service-learning.

Course Requirements
Reading and Participation Assignments:
This is a seminar class not a lecture course. We are going to be talking and listening to one another, engaging in a collective enterprise of exploration. The intersection of politics and sexuality shapes our individual and collective lives in crucial ways – many of which we recognize and many of which we often do not. The issues touched by these realms accordingly get to the very heart of how we understand ourselves and the world we share. Accordingly, we can and should expect that we will not all agree with one another regarding the topics we will be discussing. Vital to the success of this class is the commitment we make to listening and speaking with one another with respect and thoughtfulness.

The reading assignments for this course are rigorous and challenging. You are required to thoughtfully read every assignment. When I say that you are required to read, I do not mean that you should mechanically scan every page, but that you should grapple with the ideas. Mark up your text, read with a pen and paper, and write down ideas, questions, quotations, and points of confusion or contention. Read for comprehension rather than completion, pondering every idea rather than looking at every word. This means that you may need to read a section, think about it, read it again, write about it, discuss it, and then read it again. So, “do the reading” means “engage yourself with the ideas of the texts.” The reading load will be quite heavy at times. To stay afloat, plan for a sufficient amount of time to complete the assignment, and read aggressively. Remember to make use of your resources. Come to my office hours and form reading groups with your classmates.

Reading in this way will assist you in the second requirement: Your regular attendance, careful preparation, and active participation are essential. Unexcused absences from class will have serious and significant detrimental effects on your final grade. Come prepared to participate by doing the reading, reflecting upon the course material, and bringing to class issues, questions, and passages for discussion. Moreover, class participation does not simply entail speaking, but also listening in an engaged and respectful manner to the thoughts of your classmates.

There is one more crucial facet of class participation. Each student will be responsible for writing a series of one-page reaction papers throughout the semester. I will be breaking the class into four groups. Each day the students in one group will be responsible for writing and distributing one-page papers reacting to the assigned texts. These papers should be informal
(but by no means sloppy or careless). The aim of these papers is not to summarize the material, but to respond to the texts in a manner that will shape our collective analysis of these texts. **The papers are required to be posted on the WISE course platform by 9:00 PM the night before the given class meeting.** To be clear, these short essays are a vehicle for participating in class discussions and will be assessed as part of your class participation grade. Submitting thoughtful reaction papers, but rarely speaking in class is not sufficient for receiving high marks for class participation. Likewise, speaking often in class, but submitting careless reaction papers is also not sufficient for high marks for class participation.

One more note about reading and participation: Throughout the semester, I will be distributing additional articles, essays, poems, and other texts for us to read and discuss. I will also be sending out links to websites, screening short videos, playing radio programs and podcasts. These additional readings are not listed on the schedule of events below, but will be designed to complement the major reading assignments, pick up on themes from our class discussions, and keep us in touch with ongoing developments in American political culture. These supplemental texts and resources will contribute to the dynamism of the class, and let me add that you are each strongly encouraged to suggest texts and resources that we can discuss as a class.

**Writing and Service Learning Assignments:**

There are three major writing assignments in this class. The first assignment will ask you to analyze issues of sexuality and identity in films. The second assignment, which will require precision and careful revision will require you to write an essay suitable for submission to and publication in a newspaper or journal.

In addition each student will complete a final project that will culminate in the composition of a major paper and a presentation of your analysis in class. There are two options for completing this final project and each option will be weighed equally.

**Option 1:** Choose a contemporary political controversy or issue in the United States that lies at the intersection of politics and sexuality. Topics might include same-sex marriage, abortion, sex education, prostitution, pornography, sexual violence, or sexuality and consumerism. Develop a research question and compose a 20+ page research paper in which you examine and analyze this question.

**Option 2:** Develop a Service-Learning project. Choose an organization whose work addresses issues of sex and sexuality. Such organizations include Oregon Right to Life, Planned Parenthood, rape crisis centers, government agencies or officeholders, organizations that assist young women with young children, organizations that work with queer youth, or political advocacy organizations. Many organizations can be found at [http://www.givebacktoday.org](http://www.givebacktoday.org) and I am also developing a list of local opportunities. Students who choose this option will create a Service-Learning Agreement with a supervisor at this organization and me and dedicate 20-25 hours of service work to this organization over the course of the semester. Students will be asked to keep a journal in which to reflect on the work and the intersection with the themes we are exploring in class. Finally, students will compose an 8+ page “reflective essay” in which you engage in sustained consideration of a particular theme we have addressed in class and how your understanding of this theme was enhanced by your service-learning experience.

**Note:** A penalty of 1/3 grade per day will be imposed on assignments submitted late (one day’s lateness would reduce a B+ to a B). I generally do not grant extensions, but if
extraordinary circumstances arise, please consult with me as soon as possible — and certainly prior to the due date of the paper.

*** Another note: I fully appreciate that students like fast and thorough comments on their writing assignments. Unfortunately “fast” and “thorough” do not often go together well. I will strive to return your final papers in a timely fashion. As a general rule, you should receive your papers back within two weeks of turning them in.

**** Of Special Note: I take plagiarism very seriously. Plagiarism takes many forms, but the common denominator is presenting someone else’s words or ideas as your own. If you have any doubts about what constitutes plagiarism, I encourage you both to err on the side of caution and to seek advice from me or from the Writing Center. Students found guilty of plagiarism will receive a zero for the assignment AND WILL BE REPORTED TO THE DEAN.

****** Statement Concerning Disabilities: Students with documented disabilities who may need accommodations, who have any emergency medical information the instructor should know of, or who need special arrangements in the event of evacuation, should make an appointment with the instructor as early as possible, no later than the first week of the term.

Grading

| Class Participation | == 20% |
| Essay on identity and popular culture | == 20% |
| Op-ed essay on sexuality and politics | == 20% |
| Final Project | == 40% (30% paper/10% presentation) |

Total == 100%

Schedule of Events

- This schedule is subject to change — especially with the addition of relevant readings.
- Many of the items below have links; if the links become broken, please let me know. *Items in italics will be sent via email as attachments.*
- All other readings will be available through the Reserves at the Hatfield library.

“There are no societies that do not regulate sex, and thus all societies create the hope of escaping such regulations.” Michel Foucault, 1973.

M 1/19: Introduction


W 1/28:  

M 2/2:  
Robert Frost, “Mending Wall”  

W 2/4:  
Film: *Some Like It Hot*, Directed by Billy Wilder (1959).

M 2/9:  

W 2/11:  
Feona Attwood, “Sexed Up: Theorizing the Sexualization of Culture,” *Sexualities*, 2006; 9; 77

M 2/16:  

W 2/18:  

M 2/23:  
PAPER DUE.  
Film: *Southern Comfort*

W 2/25:  


W 3/11: Laura Kipnis, “(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler,*” *Queer Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader*, 102-119.


W 3/18: Assessment, Review, and Final Projects

M 3/23: *Spring Break*

W 3/25: *Spring Break*


W 4/1: Guest Scholar, Professor Tanya Erzen, author of *Straight to Jesus: Sexual and Christian Conversions in the Ex-Gay Movement*

M 4/6: *Jane Ward, “Dude-Sex: White Masculinities and 'Authentic' Heterosexuality*
Among Dudes Who Have Sex With Dudes,” Sexualities 2008; 11; 414

C. Jacob Hale, "Leatherdyke Boys and Their Daddies: How to Have Sex Without Women or Men,” Queer Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader, 61-71.


M 4/13: Megan Davidson, “Rethinking the Movement: Trans Youth Activism in New York and Beyond,” Queer Youth Culture, 243-260.

W 4/15: SSRD: Student Scholarship Recognition Day

M 4/20: Presentations

W 4/22: Presentations

M 4/27: Presentations

W 4/29: Presentations

M 5/4: Presentations