

Politics and Sexuality
Politics 303, Spring 2008
MW: 2:30-4:00, SML 216

Professor David Gutterman
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Office Hours: T 2-3:30, F 1-2:00,

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> 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)
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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 1/21: Jeffrey Weeks, “The Social Construction of Sexuality,” Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality: Documents and Essays, 2-9.
Jeffrey Weeks, “Traps We Set Ourselves,” Sexualities 2008; 11; 27.

M 1/26: Michel Foucault, “We ‘Other Victorians’” and “The Repressive Hypothesis,” The Foucault Reader, 292-329.
Michel Foucault, “Power and Sex” Michel Foucault: Politics Philosophy Culture, Interviews and Other Writings, 1977-1984, 110-124.

- "Questions for Michel Foucault" (1978), Interview with Jean Le Bitoux and Mattias Duyves, We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics, 454--459.
- W 1/28: John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, 416-431.
 Judith Butler, "Sexual Inversions," Feminist Interpretations of Michel Foucault, 59-76.
 David Halperin, "Is There a History of Sexuality?" The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, 416-431.
- M 2/2: Robert Frost, "Mending Wall"
<http://www.poets.org/viewmedia.php/prmMID/15719>
 Judith Butler, "Imitation and Gender Insubordination," The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, 307-321.
 Judith Butler, Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives, 415-427.
- W 2/4: Film: *Some Like It Hot*, Directed by Billy Wilder (1959).
- M 2/9: *Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," (1980), Reprinted in Journal Of Women's History 11-48.*
 Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet," The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader, 45-61.
 Harvey Milk, "The Hope Speech," We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics, 450-453.
- W 2/11: Michael Warner, "The Ethics of Sexual Shame," The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics and the Ethics of Queer Life, 1-40.
Feona Attwood, "Sexed Up: Theorizing the Sexualization of Culture" Sexualities, 2006; 9; 77
- M 2/16: Mark Blasius, "An Ethos of Lesbian and Gay Existence," Sexual Identities, Queer Politics, 143-177.
 Joan Scott, "Experience," Feminists Theorize the Political, 22-40.
- W 2/18: Kath Weston, "Gay Families as the 'Families We Choose,'" Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality: Documents and Essays 497-505.
C. J. Pascoe, "Dude, You're a Fag': Adolescent Masculinity and the Fag Discourse," Sexualities 2005; 8; 329.
- M 2/23: **PAPER DUE.**
 Film: *Southern Comfort*
- W 2/25: Anne Fausto-Sterling, "The Five-Sexes: Why Male and Female Are Not Enough," *The Sciences*, March/April 1993, 2-24 (plus responses).
 Judith Shapiro, Transsexualism: Reflections on the Persistence of Gender and the Mutability of Sex," Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity, 248-279.

- Hanna Rosin, "A Boy's Life," *The Atlantic*, November 2008,
<http://www.theatlantic.com/doc/200811/transgender-children>
- M 3/2: Judith Butler, "Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality," Undoing Gender, 57-74.
- W 3/4: Pat Califa, "Feminism and Sadomasochism," We Are Everywhere: A Historical Sourcebook of Gay and Lesbian Politics, 522-528.
 Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public," Queer Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader, 170-186.
- M 3/9: Audre Lorde, The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power,"
<http://www.metahistory.org/EroticUses.php>
 Cathy J. Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics," Sexual Identities, Queer Politics, 200-227.
 Richard Dyer, "It's Being So Camp as Keeps us Going," Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject, 110-116.
- W 3/11: Laura Kipnis, "(Male) Desire and (Female) Disgust: Reading *Hustler*," Queer Studies: An Interdisciplinary Reader, 102-119.
 Frontline: "American Porn,"
<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/porn/>
- M 3/16: Rosalind Pollack Petchesky, "Sexual Rights: Inventing a Concept, Mapping an International Practice," Sexual Identities, Queer Politics, 118-139.
 Tim Kaufman-Osborn, "Gender Trouble at Abu Ghraib," W Stands for Women: How the George W. Bush Presidency shaped a New Politics of Gender, 141-162.
- W 3/18: Assessment, Review, and Final Projects
- M 3/23: *Spring Break*
- W 3/25: *Spring Break*
- M 3/30: Louis and Melissa McBurney, "Christian Sex Rules: A Guide to What's Allowed in the Bedroom," *Christianity Today*,
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/mp/2001/spring/4.34.html>.
 The Joy of Christian Sex Toys, NPR, March 21, 2008,
<http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18975616>
 Deborah Caldwell, Christlike Sex: Advice from Christian sex manuals: Pray, read the Bible...and play with jump ropes and vibrators. *Beliefnet*.
<http://www.beliefnet.com/Love-Family/Relationships/Marriage/Christlike-Sex.aspx?print=true>.
 Daniel Radosh, Rapture Ready! Adventures in the Parallel Universe of Christian Pop Culture, Chs, 14-15, 249-275.
- 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.

- W 4/8: Jama Shelton, "Redefining Realities Through Self-Representational Performance," Queer Youth Culture, 69-86.
Judith Halberstam, "What's That Smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives," Queer Youth Culture, 27-50.
- M 4/13: Megan Davidson, "Rethinking the Movement: Trans Youth Activism in New York and Beyond," Queer Youth Culture, 243-260.
Anna Hickey-Moody, Mary Louise Rasmussen, and Valerie Harwood, "How To Be a Real Lesbian: The *Pink Sofa* and Some Fictions of Identity," Queer Youth Culture, 123-138.
- 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