SOCI 385: Sociology of Human Sexuality

Fall 2016
Monday and Wednesday
8:35 AM - 9:55 AM.
McIntyre Medical Building, 1034

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E-mail: Please see communication policy below
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Communication policy

Please use MyCourses for all e-mail communications. E-mails sent to the McGill general e-mail address will not be answered. I will make every attempt to answer e-mail in a timely fashion within 36 hours of receipt. Please see me during office hours for urgent issues.

Overview

This class will introduce students to the growing body of theoretical and especially empirical research suggesting social factors strongly affect one’s sexual interest, attitudes, and activity. Recent decades have seen a dramatic growth in population-based sexuality research—on topics including dyadic and life-course patterns, gender- and ethnic variations, social-network influences on sex and on sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and (most recently) interactions of biological (hormonal, genetic) and social factors in shaping sexual interest and capacities. The course will expose students to these diverse topics, their social- and policy-implications, as well as emerging theoretical frameworks on human sexuality.

Note on quantitative content

Many of the readings rely on statistical evidence. These may be hard to decipher. However, all readings will be thoroughly discussed in class, and this discussion-content will be on lecture powerpoints posted on MyCourses.

More generally, no knowledge of statistics, whatsoever, is required for this class. When reading on your own, please focus on the substantive arguments and interpretations contained in the Introduction and Discussion sections of an article. Not on Methods and Results, which will be the quantitatively-dense sections.

Participation in class discussions

Talking about sexual things is always a challenge, whatever the social context, because of an individual’s fear of self-disclosure and active sense of uncertainty, guilt and embarrassment.
about what others may think of or infer about her or him as a sexual actor. This is especially strongly felt when the individuals involved don’t know each other very well and thus don’t have any shared understandings about what things are supposed to mean and what current or future social interactions may occur. This class is mixed by gender, sexual orientation, and social group—posing even more challenges for cross-talk. This class will, in fact, develop a distinctive rhetorical framework for talking about sex that will emphasize empirical description and interpretation of the social meanings/social constructions of sexual behavior, attitudes and beliefs, and fantasy. While some class members may choose to be self-disclosing about, or even inadvertently self-disclose, their own behavior or personal interpretations in the “interests of candor, frankness, and/or liberation,” there is, by no means, any need or expectation that one does so in order to participate effectively in the class discussions. We will all learn to negotiate the distinction between public and private discourse on sex and gender so that very frank and specific commentary on particular acts, fantasies and orientations can go on in class without inappropriate and/or incorrect inferences being drawn. No one is expected to do more than she or he is prepared to do in talking about these issues in open forum. I do stress, however, that the quality of what we learn will in important measure be determined by the willingness of people to come to grips with these issues in dialogue with one another.

Learning outcomes

- Policy, politics, ideology
- Theories and methodological issues:
  - Major conceptual frameworks on human sexuality developed in sociology and associated disciplines.
  - Measurement problems with tapping sexual patterns, and tentative resolutions
- Sociology and biology of sexuality—linkages, divergences:
  - Sociobiology and evolutionary psychology
  - Hormones
  - Gene-environment interactions in sexuality
- Violence and sexual victimization:
  - Sexual harassment
  - Childhood sexual contact and life-course effects
  - Cross-national patterns in victimization—U.S., China
- Religion and the social control of sexuality
- Cross-national patterns in sexual behaviors and attitudes
- Sexual problems and dysfunctions
- STDs, HIV
  - Behavioral factors
  - Social networks / network-epidemiology
- Sexuality and health: beyond STDs

Readings

Assigned readings are hyperlinked in this course outline. If you are on campus, or otherwise connected to the campus VPN, clicking on a link will take you directly to the reading. When off campus, you will be redirected to the library website, where you’d have to log in to access the
article in question. The sole exceptions are recent works by the instructor. These are posted on MyCourses, under Content > Das articles.

**Course requirements**

It goes without saying that all assigned readings must be completed before class. Apart from assignments and exams, participation in classroom discussions will be monitored, and will count toward the final grade (5%).

There will be two **exams**: a mid-term (with short essays, worth 20% of your grade), and a final (multiple choice, worth 30%). All material for exams will be discussed in class, will be contained in the readings, and will be on powerpoints.

Part of each session will be devoted either to in-class exercises, or to documentaries on sexuality:

**Exercises**: there are three in-class exercises. Specifics to be discussed in class. **Note that these are informal.** I.e., this component of your grade will be based on diligence and enthusiasm – not quality of performance or “getting it right.” The point is to move beyond scholarly abstractions and make the social dimensions of sexuality “real.”

1. A **group** exercise on scripting theory (September 26, 28, after lecture). (10%)
2. A **group** exercise on McGill’s sexual environment (October 24-31, after lecture). (10%)
3. An **in-class self** analysis on network influences on sexuality (November 23, after lecture). (10%)

For Exercises 1 and 2, students must sign up on MyCourses for a group of 5 by the end of the add/drop period: MyCourses > Groups > Groups for class exercises 1 and 2. Those without a group by September 21 will be randomly assigned to one.

**Documentaries** (10%): These will be shown in class, after the lecture component of the day. To encourage physical attendance and class engagement, links will *not be posted* on MyCourses or otherwise provided to students. Most documentaries will be spread over multiple days. Each student is required to post two comments and two discussion questions on each movie (not each session) shown after add/drop (September 20). Reactions should be about 150 words long and self-posted on MyCourses (Discussions > REACTIONS > Movie). You are encouraged (but not required) to respond to other people’s reactions—such responses will count toward the overall grade for this component.

Finally, there are 3 full-session in-class **conferences**, on September 21, November 2, and November 16. No sign-up for conferences is necessary. You must attend at least two conferences, of your choosing, in order to receive credit (i.e., 5% of your final grade). Should you attend *any less than two* you will receive no credit.

**Evaluation**

- Participation: in class 5%
- Class exercises \(10 \times 3 = 30\%\)
- Documentaries 10%
- Conferences 5%
• Mid term 20% October 17
• Final exam 30% During exam period

Please advise the professor two weeks before the midterm if you are unable to attend the exam, so that we may make alternative arrangements.
“Students’ rights and responsibilities”

Attendance and participation in class discussions.
You are responsible for all announcements made in class and on MyCourses, as well as for all course materials given out in class. You should also check for new announcements or material on MyCourses at least weekly.

Policy Concerning the Rights of Students with Disabilities
If you have a disability please contact the instructor to arrange a time to discuss your situation. It would be helpful if you contact the Office for Students with Disabilities at 398-6009 before you do this.

Remise des travaux en français
Conformément à la Charte des droits de l’étudiant de l’Université McGill, chaque étudiant a le droit de soumettre en français ou en anglais tout travail écrit devant être noté (sauf dans le cas des cours dont l’un des objets est la maîtrise d’une langue).
Les étudiants de ce cours peuvent rédiger tous leurs travaux (incluant les examens) en français, mais doivent pour ce faire obtenir la permission préalable de la professeure. Aucune permission rétroactive ne sera accordée.

Policy for the Accommodation of Religious Holy Days
1. Students will not be penalized if they cannot write examinations or be otherwise evaluated on their religious holy days where such activities conflict with their religious observances.
2. Students who because of religious commitment cannot meet academic obligations, other than final examinations, on certain holy days are responsible for informing their instructor, with two weeks’ notice of each conflict.
3. When the requested accommodation concerns a final examination, students are responsible for advising their faculty office as soon as possible and not later than the deadline for reporting conflicts. Additional documentation confirming their religious affiliation may be requested.

Statement on academic integrity at McGill
“McGill University values academic integrity. Therefore all students must understand the meaning and consequences of cheating, plagiarism and other academic offences under the Code of Student Conduct and Disciplinary Procedures (see www.mcgill.ca/integrity for more information).”
“L’université McGill attache une haute importance à l’honnêteté académique. Il incombe par conséquent à tous les étudiants de comprendre ce que l'on entend par tricherie, plagiat et autres infractions académiques, ainsi que les conséquences que peuvent avoir de telles actions, selon le Code de conduite de l'étudiant et des procédures disciplinaires (pour de plus amples renseignements, veuillez consulter le site www.mcgill.ca/integrity).”

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"In the event of extraordinary circumstances beyond the University’s control, the content and/or evaluation scheme in this course is subject to change."
SCHEDULE (Note: readings designated as “optional” are precisely that. They will not be on the exams.)

COURSE OVERVIEW, EXPECTATIONS

September 2

THE MACRO CONTEXT: POLITICS, POLICY, IDEOLOGY

September 7

THEORY 1

September 12-14
   • *Note:* Available on MyCourses > Content > Other articles

THEORY 2

September 19

September 21

CONFERENCE 1

THEORY 3

September 26

**MEASUREMENT**

**September 28**


**BIOLOGY**

**September 28-October 5**

**EVOLUTION**


**BEYOND EVOLUTIONARY THEORY**


**October 12**

**REVIEW SESSION FOR MID TERM**

**October 17**

**MID TERM**

BIOLOGY, contd.

**October 19-31**

**HORMONES**

Gene x Environment

**November 2**

**CONFERENCE 2**

**VIOLENCE AND VICTIMIZATION**

**November 7**

**INTERNATIONAL**

**November 9-14**


**November 16**

**CONFERENCE 3**

**SEXUAL PROBLEMS**

**November 21**


**HIV, STDS: NETWORKS**

**November 23-28**


   
   - **Note:** For #2 and #3: first log in to Scopus: [https://www-scopus-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca](https://www-scopus-com.proxy3.library.mcgill.ca)

   - Then do a title search


**SEXUALITY AND HEALTH: BEYOND STDS**

**November 30**


**REVIEW SESSION FOR FINAL**

**December 5**

**FINAL EXAM: DURING EXAM PERIOD (TBA).**