The Social Politics of Sexual Education

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Office Hours: Wed, 12-2:00 pm.
Office: Raab 107
Time: Mon/Wed 5-6:30 pm
Location: Mandel Ctr for the Humanities G03
Class Site: https://moodle2.brandeis.edu/course/view.php?id=10354

Short Course Description: This course covers the history and sociocultural politics of sexual education in the Global North with a strong focus on the U.S. Using queer, feminist, disability, and race theory, it examines what shapes “sex” and “education.”

Course Description
This course covers the history of sexual education in the U.S., the conflation of abstinence and virginity (and the Western history of virginity), the way sex education is used to teach particular gender roles, sex education for those who are categorized as disabled (with an introduction to disability studies), abstinence-only and abstinence-first education and its impact on queer, trans, and intersex teens (with an introduction to queer studies), sex education and consent, sexual assault and teaching about dealing with sexual assault, and, of course, the complex politics of sex education.

We will look at research on sexual education in the United States, Canada, the U.K., Australia, and New Zealand, and consider how politics help shape sexual education and education as a whole. And, of course, we will look at the impact of feminism, gay liberation, AIDS, and other social movements on sex education and “social hygiene.”

The course has two sections: during the first half of the course, students will read academic articles, view films from a variety of backgrounds and time periods, and research current sexual education curricula to analyze and critique them as political and social tools. In the second half of the course, the class as a whole will produce a wiki which will serve as a framework for a proposed sexual education curriculum determined by the class, with goals set by the class as a whole. Individual students will produce various parts of the curriculum.

Because of the use of explicit sexual materials (we will be reviewing sexual education curricula), students must be 18 or older to take this course.

Course Goals
This course will introduce students to the history of sexual education in the United States (and a few other places), to the politics of studies on adolescent sexuality, and to the methods we use to attempt to shape and control adolescent sexuality. Students will use disability studies, queer studies, and feminist studies of sexuality to examine the impact of sexual education, and the class as a whole will analyze current sex ed curricula and produce their own proposed curriculum as a final project.

Required Readings: Books will be available at the bookstore and on reserve at the library. For purchasing, I recommend trying the Advanced Book Exchange, at http://www.abebooks.com, a consortium of independent used booksellers which I have found very useful in the past for finding multiple copies of used books (in varying conditions and prices).

Additional required articles--marked in the syllabus with the word Reserve in bold print--will be made available to students via our course website, on Latte.
Required Books (will also be on reserve in the library):

Reserve readings available on our course site.

Recommended Reading (we will be reading portions of some of these)

Important Web Resources

Course Requirements:
Syllabus Quiz 5%
Attendance and participation in class discussion: 15%
Sex Ed Curriculum Assignment: 30%
Final Project In-Class Work: 10%
Final Project (Portion of Sex Ed Curriculum) 40%

PLEASE NOTE: I do not use Latte to calculate final grades, as it is inaccurate (the rounding does not agree with my grade schema) and does not take participation, presentations, or attendance into account. I strongly recommend that you ignore the website's grade calculation.

General Requirements: Class attendance and participation are both essential to this class. For this reason, unexcused absences will impact your grade; the discussion we do in class cannot be replicated by simply doing the reading. It is necessary to do the reading beforehand to participate in the discussion, and it the class more engaging if we have things to talk about. Although this is not a writing intensive course, the papers are another vehicle for you to reflect on the reading topics and to introduce your own ideas; creativity, critical thinking, and good analysis are all highly encouraged. Please note that reading must be completed before class.

No cell phones, pagers, or other communication devices will be permitted in class, unless you are an EMT or other medical professional on call. Laptops will also not be permitted without my prior consent.

Specific Assignments: Please note that more detailed assignment sheets will be available on our website in the folder marked "Class Assignments."
Sex Ed Curriculum Assignment: Halfway through the semester, students will participate in one of the four curriculum groups and write a 5-7 page essay using our academic reading to critique the curriculum that has been assigned. The Curriculum Project will work as follows:

1. Students will be assigned randomly to one of four possible sexual education curricula:
   
a. Rights, Respect, Responsibility, by Advocates for Youth (free online): [http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/3rs-curriculum](http://www.advocatesforyouth.org/3rs-curriculum)  
c. Sex Respect, the notorious abstinence-only curriculum created by Dr. Colleen Kelly Nast, ([https://www.amazon.com/Sex-Respect-Freedom-Student-Workbook/dp/0945745117/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1483556132&sr=1-2&keywords=Sex+Respect](https://www.amazon.com/Sex-Respect-Freedom-Student-Workbook/dp/0945745117/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&qid=1483556132&sr=1-2&keywords=Sex+Respect))  

2. Students will meet with their groups in-class and divide up sections/chapters/portions of the curricula for viewing/reading among the group in-depth. If time, all members should skim or at least read descriptions/intros to all portions, but since these materials are massive, dividing them up will be most efficient.

3. We will have a day in class for students to discuss what they have read/viewed with their groups, discuss their curricula, and then bring their findings and critiques to the class at large.

4. Lastly, students will write an individual paper focusing on some portion of the curricula that they explored, analyzing it using one or more of the academic papers we have been reading this semester.

5. PLEASE NOTE: copies of all of these will be available, either online or through reserve at the Brandeis Library. You do not need to purchase these.

Final Project In-Class Work: Students will collectively write a sexual education curriculum wiki, by deciding what it should include and assigning portions of the project to individual students. In the latter half of the semester, I will allow students portions of class time to meet and discuss what the curriculum should cover and how the work will be divided up.

Final Project: Students will collaboratively produce a sexual education curriculum using a class online wiki.

IMPORTANT NOTE: These descriptions are for your information only. In all cases the assignment sheets will supersede the syllabus in matters of assignment detail. Be sure to read the assignment sheet before doing the assignment.

Email Policy: Emails will be answered within 24 hours, except for weekend days (when I cannot guarantee to check my email as regularly). I do not check email between the hours of 9 pm and 8 am. Please keep emails short and to the point; longer commentary may be better discussed during office hours. Written work will not be accepted via email except through prior arrangement.

Written Work: Assignment sheets will be made available on the class website, and due dates are specified in the syllabus. Written work submitted later than fifteen minutes after the beginning of class on the due date will be lowered by a third of a grade for each day late, except in cases of illness or emergency. All sources MUST be cited. Please use in-text citation. For example:

American teenage girls seem to be in a liminal state, for "as a society, we discarded the Victorian moral umbrella over girls before we agreed on useful strategies and programs--a kind of 'social Gore-Tex' to help them stay dry" (Brumberg 1997, 201).
Works Cited:


NOTE. Proper anthropological citation utilizes the LAST NAME of the author, the YEAR of the publication date, and the PAGE number, in that order (Chicago in-text citation). I will also accept MLA and APA citation.

I will not accept footnote or endnote citation.

EVEN MORE IMPORTANT NOTE: NO FORM OF CITATION ALLOWS YOU TO OMIT PAGE NUMBERS ENTIRELY. PERIOD. If page numbers exist, you must include them for direct quotes and specific summary material.

Be sure to include the works cited page. All papers must be word-processed, spellchecked, double-spaced, with reasonable margins, and include your name. Please include page numbers and use a font no smaller than ten point and no larger than twelve. All essays should have a title. I highly encourage you to proofread as grammar and punctuation are essential parts of writing well, and writing is one of the main tools of the social sciences. Clear and readable prose is also highly esteemed!

Important Policies on Written Work:

I will grade a paper down by an amount of my choosing for omitting any of the above (Works Cited page, name, title, etc.).

I will lower a grade by 4 points (from an A to an A-, and so on) for any paper that refers to men and women as “males” or “females.” It is objectifying and dehumanizing to refer to human beings this way and I will not encourage it. We are not lab rats.

Extension Days Policy: Students in this course are given FIVE (5) automatic extension days to use as they wish. I understand that due dates tend to fall together on the academic calendar and this is a courtesy to you so that you can arrange your obligations more comfortably. You do not need to consult with me about the use of extension days. Follow this procedure:

--Mark on the front page of the paper that you are using extension days and how many;
--Turn your paper in to LATTE on the day you wish to turn it in.

Please note that you can choose to use as many or as few as you like at a time. Weekend days count; for example if a paper is due on Friday and you wish to turn it in on Monday, you must use three extension days, not one. Extension days, of course, apply only to written work, and not to in-class assignments, "quick homework" (such as bringing examples to class), or extra credit work.

Rules for Paper Turn-ins:

All papers must be in PDF, RTF, or Microsoft Word (DOC or DOCX) format. No exceptions. I cannot accept links of any kind (to your work), nor will I follow them; I cannot look at GoogleDocs while they are on Google (you will need to export your document and upload it to our course site). This is for your legal protection as well as mine (regretfully). I cannot look at or share documents using any shared document platform (this is not because you and I do not understand the technical aspects thereof; it has to do with the problems of tracking document changes and turn-in dates).

Papers must be turned into/posted to our course site, unless you have technical difficulties, in which case you may email them directly to me.
Academic course turnins tend to be very picky about time -- even if you are 30 seconds late, it will mark the paper late. I am less picky and capable of looking at the timestamp; DO NOT PANIC. If you turned in your paper within a reasonable timeframe, you are fine.

I am happy to look at and comment on no more than 2 paragraphs of your paper via email (you may also ask whatever specific questions you have). If you would like to discuss a full draft with me, please come to my office hours or make an appointment (I can give you more complete advice; also comments on a whole draft via email are "pre-grading" which I feel is unfair to your fellow students). You do not have to print out your paper to come to office hours unless you prefer to work that way; I have a computer and you may bring one too if you wish.

Class Participation and Courtesy:

We require and expect all students to treat each other with courtesy. Courtesy includes being prepared, being on time, and being respectful of the material and your colleagues' work with it. Honor the labor of the author and your colleagues, don't just dismiss work; analysis before critique.

Harassment, whether physical, sexual, or verbal, will not be tolerated in this class. We may be discussing some sensitive and sometimes upsetting topics; I expect this classroom to be a space for growth for students to express their views.

Respect confidentiality, for both our discussion and your own experience. What we share in this room is confidential. If you want to adduce examples which do not come from the texts, don't give names: we will be discussing sensitive subjects (this goes as well for your papers, if you are giving personal experiences or doing fieldwork). A friend gave me this excellent advice for talking about issues, and not individuals: "plots, not characters."

It is possible to disagree respectfully: rather than telling people that they are wrong, do what is called "reflecting" before responding. For example, "You seem to be saying that X is Y," (reflection) "however, I have a different opinion, which is that X is Z, because of A." Also, be sure not to disagree with people (i.e. "you are wrong,") but with their actual statements ("I do not agree with X equalling Y").

Don't be afraid to speak up, as everyone has something to contribute. We are all learning. Not every student must volunteer an opinion in every class, but your opinions count -- be sure to share them. As an adjunct to this, share the floor! Let others speak (and if you are afraid that you will forget your point, write it down). We also don't have to share our insights with the whole group -- let's also do smaller discussions in class, and one on one discussions as well. We can also use the forum for discussion and students are welcome to email the professor with questions or discussion points, even anonymously.

Use "I statements" for your opinions rather than assuming that what you think should be universal. This can also be helpful for distinguishing between personal opinion and facts which can be backed up by documented scholarly evidence.

Expressions of bias are hurtful even if unintended. Even if you did not mean to step on my foot, it's best if you move when I tell you that it hurts. Similarly, when someone says something that another person finds biased and hurtful, it's best to cease and apologize, even if that's not what the first person intended. Intent is not magic and will not prevent bias from happening; we all carry around unconscious misogyny, transphobia, homophobia, ableism, racism, and a host of other prejudices because of how society is. I encourage all students to try to be graceful about listening when their bias is brought up (and I promise to do my best, myself).

If you have any problems or questions, I encourage you to bring them to me, or to the Office of the Dean of Students.

These class courtesy rules were created with the help of my 2017 Graduate Feminist Theory class at Brandeis University.
Regrade Requests: In the event of a grade dispute, I will re-evaluate the entire work according to my grading rubric. A higher grade is not guaranteed. You may always ask to see my grading rubric.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is expected of all students. All work turned in must be the work of the student whose name appears at the top of the paper, except where you have specifically requested and received permission for a collaborative effort. All students are expected to cite their sources fully (whether from texts, interviews, or online). Summary information from class texts is not considered “common knowledge” and must be cited. Ignorance is not an excuse: misrepresentation of another person’s work as your own is plagiarism under any and all circumstances. If you have any questions on when or whether to cite, please do not hesitate to ask. You may not turn in work for this class which you have previously turned in for other classes or for this class, except in the case of an explicit rewrite assignment. Plagiarism will be dealt with according to the Academic Honesty Policy; plagiarized work will result in a failure of the assignment and possibly the class and further sanctions, at the discretion of the Brandeis Administrative Board, may result.

Required Statement: Four-Credit Course (with three hours of class-time per week)
Success in this 4 credit hour course is based on the expectation that students will spend a minimum of 9 hours of study time per week in preparation for class (readings, papers, discussion sections, preparation for exams, etc.).

Please note that you may need to spend more than 9 hours of study time depending the varying amount of reading, writing, assignments, etc. per week.

If you are a student with a documented disability on record at Brandeis University and wish to have accommodation made for you in this class, please see me immediately with your letter from the Accessible Education Office. All communications will be kept confidential.

Credits: Many thanks to Hanne Blank and my grad students of Spring 2017, whose proposed class courtesy rules have been invaluable to the creation of this syllabus.

***Schedule of Readings and Due Dates***

**Week 1-2: Welcome to Sex Ed**

8/30
Introduction to the class; lecture and discussion on sex ed curricula and curricula development; film.
Reading: None

9/4
No Class

9/6


Weeks 3-4: Mommy, Where Does Sex Ed Come From? The History of Sexual Education

Warnings: Many of the readings discuss sexist, homophobic and racist attitudes of the period; however, note ESPECIALLY *The Innocent Party*, in which a young woman expresses deep depression upon finding out she has syphilis; covert racism in *Family Planning*; and discussion of homophobia and AIDS death in *Sex, Drugs, and AIDS.*

9/11


9/13


Students Will Be Assigned to their Curriculum Group This Week.

9/18


**Recommended:** Disney. 1968. *Family Planning.* Documentary Film. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=t2DkicseqmzU> reserve/links


9/20


in-class film: Getchell, Franklin. 1986. Sex, Drugs, and AIDS. Documentary Film. O. D. N. Productions. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jmdY02R124U> reserve/links

Highly Recommended: Campbell, Patty. 1986. “Young Adult Fiction as Sex Education” in her Sex Guides: Books and Films About Sexuality for Young Adults. New York: Garland Publishing. Reserve

Break: 9/21-9/22

Week 5: Special Topic: Films

Warnings: ALL FILMS: racism, sexism, disablism and homophobia.

9/25


9/27


Week 6: The Virgin Birth of Abstinence-Only Education

Warnings: Discussion of medically untrue and sexist attitudes: all readings. SPECIAL WARNING for the VERY sexist and HOMOPHOBIC No Second Chance film.

10/2


10/4


**in-class note:** We will take half an hour in class to split into your curricula groups to look over your Tables of Contents and voluntarily split the reading up among your group.

**Week 7: But What Does It LOOK Like? Sex Ed Curricula Exposed!**

**Warnings:** depending on what curriculum group you are assigned to, your reading may have misogynist, racist, homophobic, and/or disablist content.

**SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT WEEK 6:** This week we will be reading whole Sex Ed Curricula. Since this is often a great deal of reading, this will be a group process, which we will do in the following manner:

- **Week 3:** Assignment to your group -- make sure you have access to the curriculum.
- **Week 6:** Group meeting -- decide what portion of the curriculum each individual student will read/view.
- **Week 7:** (this week): Read/view your portion carefully, skim rest of curriculum.

10/9  
**Reading:** Curriculum that goes with your curriculum group (make sure you read the whole of your section).  
**in-class note:** Today you will be discussing your curricula with your groups, for about half of class, and then bringing your insights to the whole class, for the other half of class.

10/11 NO CLASS: Brandeis Thursday

**Week 8: The Missing Discourses of Desire and Consent**

10/16  

10/18


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**Week 9: What Does Feminism Have to Do With It? Gender and Power in Sex Ed**

**10/23**


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**10/25**


note: this week we will begin to devote at least half an hour every week to in-class discussion on planning our own sex ed curriculum

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**Week 10: Who Has Something Worth Saving? Sex Ed, Race, and Class**

**Warnings:** discussions of microaggression and racism: all readings this week.

**10/30**


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**11/2**


**Week 11: Does this Closet Make Me Look Invisible? Queer Teens and Sex Ed**

**Warnings: Discussions of homophobia: all readings this week.**

**11/6**

**Reading:** Gowen, L. Chris, and Nicole Winges-Yanez. 2014. "Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Questioning Youth’ Perspectives of Inclusive School-Based Sexuality Education." *Journal of Sex Research* 51(7): 788-800. Reserve

Fisher, Christopher. 2009. "Queer Youth Experiences with Abstinence-Only-Until-Marriage Sexuality Education: 'I can't get married so where does that leave me?'" *Journal of LGBT Youth* 6: 61–79. Reserve

**11/8**


**Curriculum Analysis Essay Due**

**Week 12: The Dark Side of Consent: Teaching Against Sexual Assault**

**Warnings: Discussion of sexual assault in all readings this week.**

**11/13**


**HIGHLY Recommended:** Vonderhaar, Rebecca L. And Dianne Cyr Carmody. 2015. “There Are No ‘Innocent Victims’: The Influence of Just World Beliefs and Prior Victimization on Rape Myth Acceptance.” *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 30(10) 1615–1632. Reserve

**11/15**

**Reading:** Jozkowski, Kristen N., Zoe D. Peterson, Stephanie A. Sanders, Barbara Dennis, and Michael Recce. 2014. “Gender Differences in Heterosexual College Students’ Conceptualizations and Indicators of Sexual Consent: Implications for Contemporary Sexual Assault Prevention Education.” *Journal of Sex Research* 51(8): 904–916. Reserve

Perry, Brad. 2008. “Hooking Up With Healthy Sexuality: The lessons boys learn (and don’t learn) about sexuality, and why a sex-positive rape prevention paradigm can benefit
everyone involved.” Yes Means Yes! Visions of Female Sexual Power and a World Without Rape, Jaclyn Friedman & Jessica Valenti, eds. Berkeley: Seal Press. Reserve

Thomas, Kristie A, Susan B. Sorenson and Manisha Joshi. 2016. “Consent is Good, Joyous, Sexy’: A banner campaign to market consent to college students.” Journal of American College Health 64(8): 639-650. Reserve


First Work on the Wiki Should be Done

Week 13 : But You’re Not Supposed to Have Sex! Sex Ed and Dis/Ability

Warnings: Disablist language and attitudes by some of the interviewees. Discussion of sexual assault. We are also watching a 1975 film with outdated attitudes and language about disabled people and with a couple of scenes of implied sexual coercion.

11/20


Thanksgiving Break: 11/22-11/26

11/27


Week 14 : Where Do We Go From Here? (Topic Chosen by Students)

11/29
Reading: TBD

12/4
Reading: TBD

Week 15: Sex Ed, Improved (Student Presentations)
12/6
Reading: None

Student Presentations on the sex ed wiki today.