

POLITICS OF SEX

GWSS 1002 * Spring 2011 * M/W 10:10-11 * Anderson 310

Dr. Sara Puotinen
Ford 444
Office Hrs: Wed 12-1 (in person), Mon 2-3 (via twitter)
puot0002@umn.edu

Teaching Assistants

Brittany Lewis lewis965@umn.edu
Elakshi Kumar kuma0163@umn.edu

Twitter: @gwssprof <http://twitter.com/gwssprof>

Course Blog: <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/puot0002/politicsofsex>

Course Description:

The course examines how sex, gender, and sexuality are understood historically and theoretically through the study of social discourses and everyday practices. The primary purpose of this class is to study different constructions of sex, gender, and sexuality with an emphasis on: 1. making visible the ways in which these constructions intersect, connect and exist beside each other in our everyday practices and 2. challenging how and why certain constructions are normalized and others marked as deviant or unnatural. We will question at length what gender and sexuality are and how they are related to other categories such as sex, race, and nation from a variety of feminist and queer perspectives.

After beginning with some reflections on the meaning of “politics” and “sex,” we will explore feminist and queer analyses of the politics of sex through a critical examination of:

Systems:

- Matrix of sex/gender/desire
- Heteronormativity
- Power/Privilege

Constructions:

- Sex
- Sexuality
- Gender

Individuals/Institutions/Ideologies:

- Caster Semenya
- The Medicalization of Desire
- Purity, Innocence and Protection

CLE Distribution Requirements

GWSS 1002 is certified as satisfying the Social Science (SocS) core and Diversity and Social Justice in the US (DSJ) theme CLE requirements. GWSS 1002, like other Social Science core

classes, focuses on understanding human practices within society through qualitative and quantitative studies of politics, culture, economics, and history. Politics of Sex examines how gender, sex, and sexuality shape and structure our experiences as humans in the modern world. We use a variety of analytical approaches to examine the interrelationships among individuals, institutions, structures, and ideas in regard to these and other social differences (such as race, nation, and class).

This course also satisfies the Diversity and Social Justice in the US theme. The course demonstrates to students how sex, gender, and sexuality are frequently critical to production, maintenance, and reproduction of inequalities, power, and privilege. The course explores a variety of perspectives to show how our practices of and ideas about sex, gender, and sexuality have led to social and economic hierarchies with material and cultural consequences. GWSS 1002 explores how social differences operate within normative and non-normative ways.

Course Objectives:

1. to understand better histories and theories of sexuality by interrogating social constructions of “normal” and “deviant” from diverse points of racial, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender writing and analysis.
2. to question the relationships between sex, gender and sexuality through looking at individual identity, behavior, and experience within the context of a society.
3. to question and understand our own locations in these social formations.
4. to develop effective critical thinking and engaging skills offline and online (via our course blog and twitter feed)

Course Expectations

Attend Class Regularly: You are allowed to have **two** unexcused absence during this semester. You are responsible for contacting other students to get any notes, handouts or information on assignments that you might have missed. **Please do not contact me requesting missed notes or assignments.** Instead, I would encourage you to exchange email addresses or phone numbers with several other students. Or, you could become facebook friends (or set up a facebook group for students-only in the class?). You can also tweet questions to our class.

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns: You are always welcome to visit me during my office hours (offline: Wed, 12-1 or online via twitter: Mon, 2-3). If you can't make my office hours, you can email me (puot0002@umn.edu) or tweet me (@gwssprof) with your questions or to set up another time.

Be an active and respectful participant in class: Your participation is crucial to the success of the class. To that end, you are responsible for coming to class fully prepared, actively and respectfully contributing to discussions, listening attentively to others' ideas and experiences, asking questions when you don't understand the material and giving me feedback on what is working and not working in the class. You can also post questions/comments on our course blog or twitter feed.

Hand in all assignments on time: Complete all work on time. “On time” means at the beginning of the class period on the particular due date. **Due dates are final and non-negotiable.** Exceptions will only be granted in extreme circumstances. All due dates will be posted on our course blog on the assignments page (<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/puot0002/politicsofsex/syllabus.html>). **All assigned work must be completed in order to pass the class.**

Check the blog several times a week: We will be using our course blog a lot in this class. If possible, make sure to bookmark it on your computer. You should check it regularly to read what other students in the course have to say about the readings, topics, and the politics of sex. You should also check it to read any announcements from class (like revised assignments) or to download handouts. I will also occasionally post my notes or reflections on the topic/readings.

Don’t procrastinate: At the end of every semester, I ask students to give advice to future students. One of the most popular suggestions is: don’t procrastinate. The readings, papers, and blog assignments always take more time than you think so don’t wait until the last minute to do them.

MY TEACHING PHILOSOPHY

As a teacher, two of my primary goals are to empower students to claim their own education and to inspire them to be curious and critically aware of their world/s. Even though this is a large class, I will emphasize discussion and student participation and limit the number (and length) of my lectures. This discussion/participation-based format means that you, along with your classmates, bear a lot of responsibility for the success of the class. You must hold each other accountable for the claims that you make and the ideas you express. And you must make sure that you come to class prepared with some thoughts and questions so that we can have respectful and productive discussions about the material/topics.

SOME THOUGHTS ON BLOGGING AND TWITTER

Our course **blog** (<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/puot0002/politicsofsex>) will play a central role in our class. I will use it to post announcements, class summaries, assignments, and handouts. You will be using it to complete several of your assignments and to engage and develop connections with your class members and instructors. To help you become familiar with the blog, I will provide training sessions on how to use the blog in the Rachel Raimist Feminist Media Center (Ford 468) during your discussion sections on Friday, January 21 and post an online tutorial. We will also devote the second week to discussing the blog and twitter. Throughout the semester, I will include more blog training and discussion during class time and I will be available for blog training sessions upon request. Finally, I hope to enlist some class members to serve as technology mentors to other students. If you are familiar with blogging at the U (on UThink) and are willing to help others, please let me know.

We will also be using **twitter** (www.twitter.com/gwssprof). Although I am not requiring twitter this semester (having used it extensively last semester in two of my classes), I will be using it to post announcements and hold virtual office hours. I will provide a brief tutorial (in person and online) on how to sign up for twitter and use it for class engagement.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Dishonesty

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY: submission of false records of academic achievement; cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement. Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to an including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask. - University of Minnesota

Disability Services

Students with disabilities who require accommodations in meeting course requirements should meet with me as early as possible in the term. Class materials, including this syllabus, can be made available in alternative formats upon request. It is your responsibility to provide documentation from Disability Services to receive accommodations.

Non-native English Speakers and Writers

If you need some extra assistance with the reading and writing assignments, please contact me early in the term.

U of M Harassment Policy

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation. For further information, call the University Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 418 Morrill Hall, 624-9547.

Course Requirements

Class Participation	150 points
Concept Notebook	300 points
Group Online Dialogue (diablog)	150 points
Engaging Assignments	150 points
Media Examples (blog)	100 points
Final Project	200 points
Total	1000 points

Concept Notebook**300 points**

You are required to create a concept notebook. This notebook must include the following:

5. *40 points*: A brief introductory statement (300-400 words) reflecting on the meaning/purpose of critically engaging with the “politics of sex.” This statement is **due on February 4th**.
6. *4 @ 50 points each*: 4 critical engagements with key concepts/terms from our class. The first of these critical engagements, which should be on the the sex/gender/desire matrix, is **due on February 14th**. The remaining **3** critical engagements should be selected from the following list and will be due on the days listed below:

concept	date due
heteronormativity	2/21
privilege	2/21
sex	2/28
sexuality	3/7
gender	3/9

7. *60 points*: A concluding statement (400-500 words) on your concept engagements and their connection to your own understanding of “politics of sex.”

More detailed information about this assignment will be discussed in class on January 24th. A pdf or hard copy of this assignment is available upon request. Completed notebooks will be **due on March 21st**.

Group Online Dialogue (diablog)**140 points**

You and 3 other class members are required to engage in an online dialogue via our blog (required) and twitter (optional). Your group will sign up to discuss one of the course readings. Over the course of one week you will each post summaries of the reading and then post comments, follow-up entries and/or tweet responses to each other. Finally, you will post a collaborative summary of your diablog (dialogue + blog = diablog). Here’s a breakdown of point totals for this assignment:

- Initial summary blog entry = 25 points
- Follow up posts = 60 points earned through combination of entries (@20 pts), comments (@10 pts) and tweets (@ 5 pts) [example: 1 entry + 3 comments + 2 tweets]
- Leading large group discussion = 30 points
- Collective summary = 25 points

More detailed information about this assignment will be discussed in class on February 7th. A pdf or hard copy of this assignment is available upon request. Diablogs will begin the week of **February 21st**.

Engaging Assignments**160 points**

Throughout the semester, you must complete several assignments that are designed to allow you to engage with the course materials/concepts beyond your own reading or our discussion of them.

More detailed information, including due dates, about this assignment will be discussed in class. A pdf or hard copy of this assignment is available upon request.

What's Sex Got to do with...?

100 points

You are required to complete a series of assignments involving our course blog category: "What's Sex Got to do with this?" This category is for posting images, news items or anything else that you feel speaks to issues related to the politics of sex and/or our readings and class discussion. It could also include anything that you believe especially deserves a feminist and/or queer analysis. Entries filed under this category should be entries that invite us to apply the critical skills we are learning to popular culture/current events or that inform us about ideas/topics/images that are important for raising critical awareness of sex/gender/sexuality politics. Here's a brief breakdown of the assignment:

- Post 2 examples on our blog, filed under the category, "What's Sex...?" (2 @ 15 points each)
- Post 2 comments on other students' examples (2 @ 10 points each)
- As part of a group, post one detailed analysis of example (50 points)

More detailed information about this assignment will be posted on our course blog and discussed in class on January 26th. A pdf or hard copy of this assignment is available upon request.

Final Project

200 points

You and 3-4 class members are required to complete a critical/creative project. More detailed information about this assignment will be distributed and discussed on March 23rd. We will devote some class time to preparing and engaging with these assignments in the second half of the semester (after spring break). You and your group members will present on your project during the last 2 weeks of the semester.

Note: There is no final exam for this course.

Course Readings

Course packets will be available for purchase soon at Paradigm copies on the East Bank. You will be notified when they are available. For address, see: <http://www.paradigmcopies.com/Map.aspx> All readings are also available as downloadable pdfs on our WebVista* site.

*Access WebVista through [MyU](#). Click on MyCourses and then GWSS 1002. Log in and then click on our class again. The readings will be organized under the week we will be reading and discussing them.

Course Schedule*

*This schedule is subject to change. All changes will be announced via our course blog and twitter feed.

INTRODUCTIONS**jan 19 Review class/syllabus****jan 24 Using blogs in the classroom**

Discuss concept notebook assignment.

jan 26 Using twitter in the classroom

Discuss "What's Sex Got to do with...?" assignments

jan 31 What is the POLITICS of SEX?

film: Begin *Straightlaced*

feb 2 What is the POLITICS of SEX?

Reading:

- Cranny-Francis, Anne, Wendy Waring, Pam Stavropoulos, and Joan Kirkby, ed. "Ways of Talking," 1-41.

film: continue *Straightlaced*

Due: Statement on the meaning/purpose of critically engaging with the "politics of sex."

SYSTEMS**feb 7 Sex/Gender/Desire**

Reading:

- Butler, Judith. Excerpt from *Gender Trouble*
- Pascoe, C.J. "Becoming Mr. Cougar: Institutionalizing Heterosexuality and Masculinity at River High"
- Lorber, Judith. "Beyond the Boundaries: Depolarizing the Categories of Sex, Sexuality and Gender"

feb 9 Normal, Normalization, Normativity

Reading:

- Scholar and Feminist Online. "Normativity"
- Tauches, Kimberly. "Transgendering: Challenging the Normal"
- [U of MN Map of Gender Neutral Restrooms](#)
- Browse: U of MN Transgender Commission [Website](#)

Film Clips: *Toilet Training*

feb 14 Heteronormativity

Reading:

- Sociological Images. "[Valentine's Day and Heteronormativity](#)"
- Ingraham, Chyrs. "Thinking Straight"
- Ingraham, Chyrs. "Heteronormativity: It's just not natural!"

Optional: Warner, Michael and Lauren Berlant. Excerpt from "Sex in Public," 547-557.

feb 16 Privilege and Oppression

Reading:

- Bornstein, Kate. Excerpt from My Gender Workbook
- McIntosh, Peggy. "Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack"
- Taking Up Too Much Space. "[The cisgender privilege checklist](#)"
- Sue, Derald Wing and David Rivera. "[Microaggressions in Everyday Practices](#)"
- Browse the [Microaggressions blog](#)

CONSTRUCTIONS

feb 21 Sexed bodies

Reading:

- **FOCUS:** Somerville, Sibohan. "Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body"
- Wilchins, Riki. "Can Sex Have Opposites?"
- Martin, Emily. "The Egg and the Sperm"

feb 23 Sexed bodies

Reading:

- hooks, bell. "Selling Hot Pussy"

film: clips from *Cultural Criticism and Transformation*

Special Event: Presentation by Dr. Somerville on **friday, feb 25th @ 4PM** in Walter Library 101. Earn **extra credit** by attending and posting a brief (200-300 word) reflection on our blog.

feb 28 The Invention of Sexuality

Reading:

- Katz, Jonathan. "The Invention of Heterosexuality"
- Weeks, Jeffrey. "The Invention of Sexuality"
- Marinucci, Mimi. "The Social Construction of Sexuality"

march 2 Sexuality and sex practices

Reading:

- Rubin, Gayle. Excerpt from "Thinking Sex"
- Wilkerson, Abby. "Disability, sex radicalism, and political agency"
- Bednarska, Dominika. "Passing Last Summer"
- Seibers, Tobin. "Sex, Shame and Disability Identity"

march 7 Gender

Reading:

- Bornstein, Kate. Excerpts from *My Gender Workbook* and *Gender Outlaw*
- West, Candace and Don H. Zimmerman. "Doing Gender"

film: *The Codes of Gender*

march 9

We will be meeting in Blegen 415 and 425 for diablo discussions. No class on Friday, March 11.

march 14/16 SPRING BREAK

**INDIVIDUALS
INSTITUTIONS
IDEOLOGIES**

march 21 Caster Semenya: sex/gender/sexuality/race/nation

Reading:

- Sociological Images. "[The Question of Caster Semenya's Sex](#)"

note: The video that is embedded in this entry no longer works. Here is a [link](#) to the video.

- Sociological Images. "[Semenya Makeover as Gender Performance](#)"
- Scully, Pamela. "[The Curious Case of Caster Semenya](#)"
- Scully, Pamela. "[The Trials of Caster Semenya](#)"
- Levy, Ariel. "[Either/Or: Sports, Sex and the Case of Caster Semenya](#)" (also available as pdf on WebVista)
- Dreger, Alice. "[Where's the Rulebook?](#)" (also available as pdf on WebVista)
- IAAF. "[Policy on Gender Verification](#)" (also available as pdf of WebVista)
- Wackwitz, Laura A. "Verifying the myth: Olympic Sex Testing and the category 'woman'" (WebVista)

Diablo: Levy, Dreger and the 2 Scully essays

march 23 No Class Today

march 28 Athletes and Sex

Reading:

- Carty. "Textual Portrayals of Female Athletes"

- McKay/Johnson. "Pornographic eroticism and sexual grotesquerie in representations of African American sportswomen"
- Some "What's Sex..." entries:
 1. [what's sex got to do with...athletics??](#)
 2. [what's sex got to do with...the Olympics?](#)
 3. [what's sex got to do with...sports?](#)
 4. [what's sex got to do with...workout shoes?](#)

Diablog: Carty

march 30 Final Group Projects

april 4 Bodies and Pleasures and the Medicalization of Desire

film: Begin [Orgasm, inc.](#)

april 6 Bodies and Pleasure and the Medicalization of Desire

Reading:

- Sociological Images. "[The Medicalization of Sexuality](#)"
- Koedt, Anne. "Myth of the Vaginal Orgasm"
- Tiefer, Leonere. "Women's Sexual Problems"
- Lorde, Audre. "The Uses of the Erotic: Erotic as Power"

film: Complete *Orgasm, inc.*

april 11 Sex and Children

Reading:

- Levine, Judith. Preface/Introduction from *Harmful to Minors: The Perils of Protecting Children from Sex*
- Fahs, Breanne. "Daddy's Little Girls"

april 13 Sex and Children

Reading:

- Orenstein, Peggy. Excerpt from *Cinderella Ate My Daughter*

Diablog: Levine and Fahs

april 18 Sex Education

film: [The Education of Shelby Knox](#)

april 20 Sex Education

Reading:

- Fields, Jessica. "'Children Having Children': Race, Innocence, and Sexuality Education"
- Knox, Shelby. "[Young Feminist Bashing: Rethinking Virginity Edition](#)"

finish film: *The Education of Shelby Knox*

Diablog: Fields

april 25 Presentations

april 27 Presentations

may 2 Presentations

may 4 Wrap-Up