This course explores specific moments (from the late-19th century to the present) in American cultures to understand and analyze evolving conceptualizations of gender and sexuality. Particular attention will be given to the ways in which narratives of sexuality become dominant in the cultural imaginary. How do these stories of gender and sexuality get framed, and circulate as “normal”? How are heteronormative ideals disrupted? Some of the issues we will discuss include: marriage, sex and the culture wars, feminism, masculinities, race and ethnicity, AIDS, pornography, among other topics.

Examination of literature, film, television, advice manuals, reports on sexual behavior (Kinsey), music videos, and other cultural artifacts. Theoretical works by Freud, Foucault, and others will be read alongside primary works.