

01:050:342:B1

Summer, 2006

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Office hours: immediately after class

## AMERICAN SEXUALITY

Sexuality is basically a cultural concept. It refers to ideas and values and assumptions about sex. It is more about gender than about biology and aggressively confronts the nature vs. nurture controversy. Further, by titling this course "*American Sexuality*," we are asking whether there is anything American about sexuality as constructed in our culture. American attitudes towards sex are wide ranging, from those who believe in complete sexual freedom to others who practice celibacy and still others who believe in arranged marriages. And then there are issues raised by race and class and ethnicity and religion and by a multitude of different sexualities. The course will, however, argue that there are common denominators among Americans that may permit us to speak of an *American Sexuality*.

### Required Books

Rita Mae Brown

Rubyfruit Jungle

Nathaniel Hawthorne

The Scarlet Letter

Mickey Spillane

The Big Kill (or I the Jury)

Jacqueline Susann

The Valley of the Dolls

Deborah Tannen

You Just Don't Understand: Women and Men in Conversation

Note: Books are available in the Douglass bookstore, located on the corner of Nichol Avenue and Lipman Drive. The bookstore is normally open till 4:30, but till 6:00 on May 30 and 31. Unfortunately, the Mickey Spillane novel is only available in an anthology of three of his books, but the bookstore has found a good number of used copies. Also, you may be able to find *The Big Kill* inexpensively in a used bookstore or your parents may have a copy around the house. Finally, if you can find a copy of *I, The Jury*, that will do as well. There's also all the used book services such as that which Amazon.com has.

Attendance Policy Since the summer session is so abbreviated, attendance is required. You should also want to be here every day because your final examination will definitely suffer if you miss classes. Nevertheless, given that emergencies arise, you may have one absence without your grade being affected. More than one absence, regardless of the reason, will negatively impact your grade.

Final Grade Your final grade will be affected by a number of factors: your two written projects, the second with twice the value of the first; your final examination, consisting of an objective portion and an essay portion; class participation; and attendance.

Assignments Due: Your first assignment is due in class on Monday, June 12. The second assignment is due in class on Thursday, June 29. Late assignments will not be accepted, so be sure to get them in on time.

## SYLLABUS

Tuesday, May 30 SEX VERSUS SEXUALITY

Lecture: The Anthropology of Sex

Wednesday, May 31 SEX VERSUS SEXUALITY II.

Lecture: A brief history of American Sexuality

Thursday, June 1 SEXUALITY AND ADVERTISING

films: "Killing us Softly," "Still Killing Us Softly," "Beyond Killing us Softly," "Stale Roles and Tight Buns," "Body Image for Boys"

Monday, June 5 ISSUES OF GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN A COWBOY MOVIE

John Ford's "Stagecoach"

Tuesday, June 6 "Stagecoach" continued. Discussion.

Wednesday, June 7 THE SCARLET LETTER: TWO VERSIONS

read: Nathaniel Hawthorne, The Scarlet Letter

Thursday, June 8 "The Scarlet Letter" (the film)

Monday, June 12 GENDER AND TRANSSEXUALITY: ARE WE REALLY ALL JUST MALE AND FEMALE?

**note: first assignment due in class**

film: "The Brandon Teena Story"

Tuesday, June 13 Continued discussion of "The Brandon Teena Story," the film "Boys

Don't Cry," and, if there is time, "Metamorphosis."

Wednesday, June 14 TOUGH GUYS DON'T CRY

read: Mickey Spillane, The Big Kill

Thursday, June 15 MEN'S ROLES

films: "Men's Lives," "Battered Men" (Oprah) "Tough Guise"  
"Wrestling With Manhood"

Monday, June 19 WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY AND SHE IS US

read: Jacqueline Susann, Valley of the Dolls

Tuesday, June 20 WOMEN'S ROLES

films: "Silvia, Fran, and Joy," Dream Worlds 2," "Slim Hopes"  
"Not a Love Story"

Wednesday, June 21 ALTERNATE SEXUALITIES

films: "Word is Out," "A Little Respect: Gay Men,  
Lesbians, and Bi-Sexualism on Campus" "Paris is Burning"

Thursday, June 23 ALTERNATE SEXUALITIES II.: A LIBERATED BOOK?

read: Rita Mae Brown, Rubyfruit Jungle

Monday, June 26 ALTERNATE SEXUALITIES II: A LIBERATED MOVIE?

film: "Boys in the Band"

Tuesday, June 27 (Continued) "Boys in the Band"

Wednesday, June 28 MEN AND WOMEN: FRIENDS OR ENEMIES?

films: "Not Together Now," "Lives Together, Worlds Apart,"  
"Deborah Tannen: He Said, She Said: Gender, Language  
Communication."

Thursday, June 29 MEN AND WOMEN (continued)

**note: second assignment due in class**

Deborah Tannen You Just Don't Understand: Women and  
Men in Conversation

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Monday, July 3

SEXUAL HARRASSMENT: WHAT IS IT EXACTLY?

The Rutgers Policy

films: "Sexual Harrassment," "Sexual Harrassment on the Job"

Wednesday July 5

RAPE: ARE WE A RAPE CULTURE?

films: "Rape Culture," "Date Rape," "Campus Rape," "Dating Rites."

Thursday, July 6

FINAL EXAMINATION

### ASSIGNMENTS

Assignment #1 : Sexuality in American Advertising: I would like you to write a 1-2 page analysis of a piece of American print advertising (magazine, newspaper, etc.--not television or radio commercials) as far as its sexual content is concerned, though I would prefer you seek an advertisement where the sexuality is not explicit but implied in a subtle way. How is sex, sex roles, gender, etc. being used to sell the particular product? Include the advertisement itself on the cover of your project. The project must be typed on standard 8 and 1/2 by 11 paper and stapled together--no paper clips please. It must be turned in in class on **Monday, June 12** without fail. Late papers will not be accepted. Give your project a title suggestive of the argument you mean to advance about the ad.

Assignment # 2 : You may choose from among the following five options. This project is due in class on **Thursday, June 29**, without fail. Again, it must be handed in that day and late papers will not be accepted.

1. COMPARISON OF TWO SEX MANUALS: You may do a comparison of a current sex manual with one from the past or, instead, concentrate on the subtle differences between manuals of the same time period. You will want to compare and contrast attitudes, values, and assumptions about sexual behavior in the manuals. What can be learned about evolving cultural values from these sex manuals?

2. COMPARATIVE ANTHROPOLOGICAL STUDY You may want to compare the sexual habits, behavior, assumptions, etc. of a particular tribe or group studied by anthropologists with another group or with Americans. Or you can compare the sexual values and behavior of contemporary nations, ethnic groups, or religious groups. One might also look at fraternities, sororities, or athletic teams in terms of their sexual values and behavior.

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3. SURVEY: You may wish to do a survey of sexual attitudes/sexual behavior. This survey should be carefully thought out. The questions should be drafted and sample selected very carefully. You must also fully protect the anonymity of your respondents or they will not respond to your questionnaire. Even then, one can assume that, in the fields

of sex and sexuality, people will often answer questions in terms of what they wish to believe about themselves not what they know to be true. Thus you must design your survey as best you can to elicit honest answers. The responses of those taking your survey are to be attached as an appendix to the survey. But, most important, you are to write a paper including a statistical analysis of your results and a discussion of what these results mean, what they tell us about America or about your sample of respondents.

4. FIELD INVESTIGATION: You may wish to investigate a current problem in your home locality or some other locale familiar to you which shows some aspect of that culture's attitudes toward "appropriate" sexual behavior. For example, how does your former high school deal with the issue of teenage pregnancy? How does your community approach sex education? How are STDs being handled politically?

5. A PROJECT YOU PROPOSE TO ME: Make sure you clear any alternate project with me. And by the way, you may also consider a project that is not formally an academic paper. For example, I can imagine a project that is expressed as a small film or using other alternative media.

Please remember that the second assignment counts with twice the value as that of the first assignment. Thus, this second project should be quite substantial both in length and in depth.