

CLC 1023

Sex and Culture



Course Guidebook 2009-2010

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Course Description

The overarching theme for CLC 1023 is “Sex and the Cities.” Organized as a tour of the erotic capitals of the world, with stopovers in the major cities that have contributed to humanity’s cumulative understanding of sex, the course is designed to introduce students to the great classics of erotic literature along with the most influential philosophical and theological interpretations of the meaning of sexual experience.

As the title of the popular television series *Sex and the City* suggests, sex is as “natural” as the impulse to buy overpriced designer high heels. Despite Broadway’s quaint insistence on “doin’ what comes natcherly,” sex turns out to be a highly cultural activity. The history of its definitions, constructions, and representations has been deeply connected since the dawn of civilization with the complex development of urban cultures around the world.

There were sexual *acts* before the invention of the City, no doubt, but the invention of Sex itself – as a system of rules, a set of identities, a philosophy of life, a site of religious contestation, an archive of transgressive knowledge – enters into history with the emergence of the earliest city-dwellers, the ancient ancestors of Carrie Bradshaw and her urbane circle of friends. Even the pastoral myth that “pure” sex can only happen in the “untamed” natural world beyond the city limits (a myth Carrie entertains when she visits Aidan’s rustic cottage for a steamy weekend away from New York) is a very urban fantasy traceable back to the ancient cities of Athens, Alexandria, and Rome.

The peculiarities of the sexual culture of each city on the tour will be considered in relation to readings and images reflecting its erotic character. Ancient Athenian attitudes towards sex between men, for instance, will provide a context for reading the speeches in the *Symposium*, Plato’s great dialogue on Eros. And Hollywood’s normalizing construction of heterosexual relations in the Cold War Era will be considered in relation to Liz Taylor’s “scandalous” portrayal of Cleopatra.

The course also focuses on the erotic icons or sexual personae associated with each city. In Babylon the figure of the Whore will be highlighted; in Athens, the Platonic Lover; in Rome, the Virgin; in Carthage, the Love Martyr; in Camelot, the Chivalric Lover; in Florence, the Graces. While the first term visits erotic cities in Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Renaissance, the second term takes us into the modern period with visits to London, Paris, Vienna, Venice, Hollywood, and New York. Representations of erotic icons will be drawn from literature, painting, sculpture, ballet, film, and television.

CLC 1023 is an introductory course for the minor in Gender, Sexuality, and Culture (GSC) which was launched in the fall of 2004.

CLC 1023: Sex and Culture

Principal Aims of the Course

1.

To study diverse representations of the erotic life in literature, music, art, and performance from Antiquity through the Middle Ages and the Renaissance to the Present Day.

2.

To explore the traditions of erotic representation in relation to major philosophical and theological understandings of sexual desire, activity, experience, and identity.

3.

To examine the urban contexts and social conditions in which powerful myths about sex and sexuality have emerged in association with sexual character types or “erotic icons.”

CLC 1023: Sex and Culture

Professor James Miller: 2009-2010 Schedule of Topics for Lectures and Breakout Groups

FIRST TERM

CONCEPTUAL FOUNDATIONS

***Week 1:** Erotic Iconography/ Iconology

Fri Sept 11 – Taboo and Transgression

***Week 2:** Erotic Icons → The Earth Mother, The Sky Father

Mon Sept 14 – Terms and Tropes

Wed Sept 16 – Icons and Personae

Fri Sept 18 – Spaces and Acts

URUK / BABYLON

***Week 3:** Erotic Icons → The Great Whore, The Wild Man, The Fertile King

Mon Sept 21 – The Wild Man and the Whore: *Gilgamesh Tablet I*

Wed Sept 23 – The Wild Man and the King: *Gilgamesh Tablet II*

Fri Sept 25 – The Goddess and the Bull: *Gilgamesh Tablet VI*

TROY

***Week 4:** Erotic Icons → The Beauty Queen, The Femme Fatale, The Lesbian Warrior

Mon Sept 28 – The Cult of Aphrodite: Guest Lecture by Professor Olson

Wed Sept 30 – Helen of Troy [Guest Lecture by Professor Olson]

Fri Oct 2 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #1:** Advice on Assignments + Hymn to Aphrodite

THEBES

***Week 5:** Erotic Icons → The Maenad, The Satyr, The Tragic Androgyne

Mon Oct 5 – The Sex Life of Satyrs [guest lecture by Professor Olson]

→ **Assignment #1: Due**

Wed Oct 7 – Erotomachia [Battle of the Sexes]

Fri Oct 9 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #2:** Tragic Androgyny

ATHENS

***Week 6:** Erotic Icons → The Erastes, The Eromenos

Mon Oct 12 – Thanksgiving Holiday: No Classes

Wed Oct 14 – Greek Heterosexuality: Guest Lecture by Professor Olson
Wed Oct 16 – Greek Homosexuality: Guest Lecture by Professor Olson

***Week 7:** Erotic Icons → The Gay Warrior, The Love Doctor

Mon Oct 19 – Phaedrus: Praising Eros

Wed Oct 21 – Pausanias: Dividing Eros

Fri Oct 23 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #3:** Eryximachus: Diagnosing Eros

***Week 8:** Erotic Icons → The Comic Androgyne, The Gay Aesthete, The Platonic Lover

Mon Oct 26 – Aristophanes: Mythologizing Eros

Wed Oct 28 – Agathon: Ritualizing Eros

Fri Oct 30 – Socrates: Intellectualizing Eros

ALEXANDRIA

***Week 9:** Erotic Icon → The Phallic Woman

Mon Nov 2 – The Cult of Isis: Guest Lecture by Professor Olson

Wed Nov 4 – The Historical Cleopatra: Guest Lecture by Professor Olson

Fri Nov 6 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #4:** Rome Reacts to Cleopatra

ROME

***Week 10:** Erotic Icons → The Ovidian Lover, The Virgin Metamorphosed

Mon Nov 9 – Roman Sexuality: Guest Lecture by Professor Olson

Wed Nov 11 – Ars Amatoria: Ovidian Allegories of Sex

Fri Nov 13 – Amorous Transformations

CARTHAGE

***Week 11:** Erotic Icons → The Love Martyr

Mon Nov 16 – Sex and History: Dido's Ancient Flame

Wed Nov 18 – Augustinian Love Theory

Fri Nov 20 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #5:** Augustine's Sex Education

CAMELOT

***Week 12:** Erotic Icon → The Chivalric Lover

Mon Nov 23 – Love Worship: The Galehaut Incident

→ **Assignment #2: Due Date**

Wed Nov 25 – The Dance of Love: Guillaume de Lorris

Fri Nov 27 – Medieval Sex Advice: Jean de Meun

CITY OF DIS

***Week 13:** Erotic Icons → The Sexual Damned (1): The Lustful

Mon Nov 30 – **MIDTERM TEST** (in lecture room)
Wed Dec 2 – Infernal Orgasm: Paolo and Francesca
Fri Dec 4 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #6:** Discussion of *Inferno* 5

***Week 14:** Erotic Icons → The Sexual Damned (2): The Sodomite, The Vaginal Man
Mon Dec 7 – Infernal Outing: Brunetto and the Sodomites
Wed Dec 9 – Infernal Invagination: Mohammed

SECOND TERM

FLORENCE

***Week 15:** Erotic Icons → The Neoplatonic Lover, The Graces, The Mars-Venus Couple
Mon Jan 4 – The Rebirth of Venus
Wed Jan 6 – The Dance of the Graces
Fri Jan 8 – The Taming of Mars

SIENA

***Week 16:** Erotic Icon → The Big Prick (Cazzone)
Mon Jan 11 – The Virgin's City
Wed Jan 13 – The Book of the Prick
Fri Jan 15 – The Invention of Sexual Politics

LONDON

***Week 17:** Erotic Icons → The Bisexual Love-Slave, The Ironic Androgyne, The Dark Lady
Mon Jan 18 – Master-Mistress of My Passion
Wed Jan 20 – The Barge Speech
Fri Jan 22 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #7:** Fire and Air

FORBIDDEN CITY

***Week 18:** Erotic Icons → The Yin-Yang Couple, The Eunuch, The Concubine
Mon Jan 25 – The Sexuality of Eunuchs
→ **Assignment #3: Due Date**

Wed Jan 27 – Yin and Yang: Chinese Eroticism
Fri Jan 29 – The Concubine as Femme Fatale

PARIS

***Week 19:** Erotic Icons → The Male and Female Libertine, The Ingenue, The Sadean Lover
Mon Feb 1 – Sex and Death: Sade's Dream of Laura
Wed Feb 3 – Libertine Philosophy I: Sadean Men
Fri Feb 5 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #8:** Libertine Philosophy II: Sadean Women

ST. PETERSBURG

***Week 20:** Erotic Icon → The Romantic Lover
Mon Feb 8 – Romantic Metamorphoses
Wed Feb 10 – *Swan Lake* I: Traditional Version
Fri Feb 12 – *Swan Lake* II: Queer Version

***Week 21:** Conference Week
Mon Feb 15 – no class [Family Day]
Wed Feb 17 – no class
Fri Feb 19 – no class

VIENNA

***Week 22:** Erotic Icons → The Female Hysteric, The Neurotic Lover
Mon Feb 22 – Freud and Sade
Wed Feb 24 – Invitation to an Orgy
Fri Feb 26 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #9:** Schnitzler and Kubrick

HOLLYWOOD

***Week 23:** Erotic Icon → The Screen Idol
Mon Mar 1 – Celluloid Cleo: Guest Lecture by Professor Olson
Wed Mar 3 – The Cult of Liz
Fri Mar 5 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #10:** Cleo Drag: *Hosanna*

BOMBAY/ BOLLYWOOD

***Week 24:** Erotic Icons → The Romantic Androgyne, The Transgressive Lover
Mon Mar 8 – Bataille Erotics: The Dance of Shiva
Wed Mar 10 – *Mother India*: Sex and Death in Bollywood
Fri Mar 12 – Raj Rao's Bombay

NEW YORK

- *Week 25:** Erotic Icons → The Gold Digger, The Single Girl
Mon Mar 15 – Foucaultian Erotics
→ **Assignment #4: Due Date**
Wed Mar 17 – Carrie and the Three Graces
Fri Mar 19 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #11:** Catching Mr. Big

AMSTERDAM

- *Week 26:** Erotic Icons → The Dandy, The Metrosexual
Mon Mar 22 – Butlerian Erotics: Performing Gender
Wed Mar 24 – Dandy's Inferno
Fri Mar 26 – Red Light District

INTERNET

- *Week 27:** Erotic Icon → The Cybersexual
Mon Mar 29 – Virtual Identities
Wed Mar 31 – Cybersex
Fri Apr 2 – **BREAKOUT GROUPS #12:** strategies for studying for the final exam
- *Week 28:** Erotic Icon → The Beauty King
Mon Apr 5 – Back to Babylon
Wed Apr 7 – Informal Q & A Session with Professor Miller: Tips for the Final Exam

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Required Reading

The following titles are available in the UWO Bookstore.

1. Euripides, *Bacchae and Other Plays* (Penguin Paperback)
2. Plato, *Symposium* (Penguin Paperback)
3. Arthur Schnitzler, *Dream Story* (Penguin Paperback)
4. Michel Tremblay, *Hosanna* (General Publishing)
5. *Sex and the Cities: Babylon to the Internet* (Coursepack)

Required Viewing

The works listed below can be viewed in the Film Resources and Archives Room in the basement of University College (UC1).

First Term

Music Video

We're Talking Vulva. dir. Dempsey (1990)

Second Term

Ballet

Swan Lake ["classical version"] by Tchaikovsky. Kirov Ballet. [video]

Swan Lake ["queer version"] choreographed by Matthew Bourne [video]

Films

Mother India. dir. Mehboob. (1957)

Cleopatra. dir. Mankiewicz (1963).

Eyes Wide Shut. dir. Kubrick (1999)

Shortbus. dir. Mitchell (2006)

Sex and the City. dir. King (2008)

Television

Sex and the City [TV series: any episode]. HBO. 1999/2000.

Queer as Folk [American version: Season One #9, #20]. Showtime. 2000/2001

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Grade Breakdown

<u>Graded Work</u>	<u>Marks</u>	<u>Notes</u>
Breakout Group Attendance	10	1 mark per class attended for any 10 of the 12 classes scheduled for Breakout Groups
Second Term Engagement	10	1 mark for each correct answer in 10 best out of 12 pop-quizzes based on the Big Q segments. The quizzes will begin in <i>second term</i> and will occur <i>only during lecture hours</i> .
Assignment #1	10	See Assignment #1 instructions
Assignment #2	10	See Assignment #2 instructions
Assignment #3	10	See Assignment #3 instructions
Assignment #4	10	See Assignment #4 instructions
Midterm Test	10	25 brief quiz questions (not multiple choice): half a mark per answer for the best 20 answers
Final Examination		
Part One	10	“Terms and Tropes”
Part Two	10	“Models and Propositions”
Part Three	10	“Icons and Myths”
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Contact Information

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