

Sexual Subjects
GSWS 2273E

The University of Western Ontario (Western University)
London Canada
Department of Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies

The department would like to recognize that we are located on the traditional land of the Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Lenape and Attawandaron peoples.

Class: 3hrs

Room:

Instructor: Professor Cayen

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Course Description

This interdisciplinary course focuses on sexuality as a subject of study and considers how marginalization and discrimination has been structured, imposed, and resisted through the 20th and 21st century. Students will examine a variety of primary documents and theoretical texts – informed by radical, sex-positive, and anti-racist feminism, queer theory, and psychoanalysis, among others – to question the construction or nature of sexual identity and experience.

No prerequisites

Learning Objectives

Students will be able to:

- Explain the socially constructed nature of sexuality, identity, and practice while considering the political opportunities of identity politics
- Re-imagine historical progress and growing socio-political acceptance of gender and sexual diversity as the result of human action and activism, not the mere passage of time
- Be empowered to participate in this activism and progress
- Evaluate and apply theoretical work and key debates in feminism, sexuality studies, and queer theory
- Assess the ways in which sexuality, sexual identity and sexual subjectivity are always contingent upon gender, race, religion, ethnicity, age, ability and class
- Discuss sexual practices through the lens of sex positivity, decolonization, anti-racism, and anti-imperialism

Details in this syllabus may change with sufficient notice to the class.

Required Reading

Fahs, B. (2020). Burn it down!: feminist manifestos for the revolution. Verso Press.

- Hardcover and e-book available from the publisher:
<https://www.versobooks.com/books/3151-burn-it-down>

All other readings available via the Course Readings portal linked in OWL

Student Evaluation

More detail for all assignments will be posted to OWL.

Term 1

5% *Participation*

This mark is the smallest in the course but the most important to your learning. Read weekly prior to lecture; take notes during lecture and record your questions; bring your questions and reflections to class. Nothing is too big or too small: I am thrilled to get the chance to clarify and engage with you.

20% *Where Were All the _____ in History?*

Using discipline-specific research (e.g., ~3 sources from journal articles in LGBTQ+ studies), offer a discussion on the experiences of a select group of sexual ‘others’ in a specific period in history. 3-4 pages.

15% *Manifesto for Sexual Liberation*

In small groups, and through discussion and debate, develop a manifesto for a sexual issue of importance to you. Be creative! Consider, though do not feel restricted by, the norms of the manifestos we have studied in class. We will discuss as a class our priorities for public distribution: live manifesto reading, gallery display, or class website?

Term 2

5% *Participation*

As above.

20% *Theorizing Manifestos (Manifestos as Theory)*

Offer an assessment of how one or two theoretical perspectives (using assigned texts from Module 2) can inform your understanding of the issues or approach of one manifesto of your choosing. 4-5 pages.

10% *Sex Wars Debate*

Alone or with 1-2 other students, prepare an outline of the key arguments, as you see them, in one of the three “sex war” debates represented in our readings (BDSM, pornography, or sex work). Present your assigned “side” during a lively in-class discussion!

25% *Theorizing Sexual Practice*

Offer an assessment of how one or two theoretical perspectives can inform your (1) understanding of a sexual practice, or (2) a different theoretical perspective of your choosing. 5-6 pages.