

CMST 3900: Sexual Communication

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Meeting day and time: MWF 12:30-1:20

Office hours: MW 1:30-2:30

Sec.: 1

Term: Fall 2016

Meeting room: COATES 202

COURSE OVERVIEW

Sex and sexuality have fascinated cultures for centuries. They have been topics of poetry and song, targets of policy and advocacy, mechanisms of power and influence, and foundations of love and romance. In this course, we will examine the ways in which people communicate about sex in a variety of contexts. To begin, we will examine the role of sexuality in society and how we come to define and make sense of its various meanings. We will discuss how we publicly communicate about sex and sexuality through cultural discourses, and how public discourses also shape our shared understanding of “sexiness” and sexuality. Interpersonally, we will explore how individuals negotiate and consent to sexual contact, as well as how they disclose their sexual preferences, and use sexual communication to enhance intimacy in more established romantic relationships. In health contexts, we will discuss the implications of sexually transmitted diseases in negotiating sexual relationships. Finally, we will explore the ways in which new media and technologies have changed sexual communication and relationships in today’s society. Through course readings, vivid class discussions, and investigative research, students will learn about sexual communication from a variety of communication perspectives.

COURSE OBJECTIVES

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Describe the challenges associated with sexual communication in various public, mediated, interpersonal, and relational contexts.
2. Describe the implications of new technologies and work environments for sexual communication.
3. Demonstrate an ability to assimilate readings from class and to write in a manner that incorporates the readings
4. Demonstrate an ability to use communication concepts to analyze human behavior and to apply those concepts to improve social and professional life.
5. Demonstrate competency in library research and an ability to integrate resources to understand a communication phenomenon related to sex.
6. Demonstrate an ability to critically engage established norms and expectations of sex and sexuality.
7. Analyze data about sexual practices, communication, and/or relationships.
8. Become a more effective critical thinker and consumer of information.

9. Demonstrate an understanding of the historical, cultural, and philosophical complexity that supports sophisticated discourse.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

This class engages, as one might expect, adult content. We will be approaching all material, topics, and content from an ACADEMIC perspective and for the purpose of understanding the relationship between sex and communication. Just because we watch or read something, should not reflect that your classmates or I are promoting it. If you are uncomfortable engaging in adult related content for the purpose of academic debate and conversation, this may not be the class for you.

The success of this course depends on the interactions generated between the instructor and the students (me and you). I do expect you to participate actively in class, share your ideas and opinions, comment on and assess those of your fellow classmates. However, I do demand that everyone treat each other with respect. Ridicule or disrespect of any sort will not be tolerated. While I use a wide variety of mediated examples to illuminate points and bring life to discussion in class, I do not use powerpoint presentations and will not post “lecture outlines” on Moodle. My hope is that we will all become more engaged members of the classroom discussions because of this commitment to an engaged and discussion-oriented environment.

COURSE WEBSITE

This course makes use of the Moodle website. You should be able to access Moodle through your PAWS account. After you log into PAWS, you will find the link to Moodle under the “Student Services” category. I will post readings, course assignments, documents, as well as any announcements. Make sure to check the website regularly.

COURSE MATERIALS

- readings/materials will be posted online through Moodle
- Access to and competency with online search engines and university libraries is essential for success in this course.

ASSIGNMENTS

Grade Scale

Letter Grade	Point Range Needed
A+	98-100%

A	92-97.9%
A-	90-91.9%
B+	88-89.9%
B	82-87.9%
B-	80-81.9%
C+	78-79.9%
C	72-77.9%
C-	70-71.9%
D+	68-69.9%
D	62-67.9%
D-	60-61.9%
F	0-59%

Assignment Weights

ASSIGNMENT	Points
Sex in Context Presentations	100 points
Article Presentation	50 Points
Exams	2 @ 150 points each, 300 points total
Engagement	Various activities/in class quizzes/assignments/engagement = 50 points total
TOTAL	500

Assignment Descriptions

Sex in Context Presentations (150 points) Each member of the class will partner with several other members of the class to present a brief of a particular contemporary issue or controversy regarding sex and sexuality in communication contexts and perform an analysis using insights, theories, and concepts discussed throughout the semester. Must follow specific format and requirements outlined in the assignment sheet. Each group will present their results in a 10-minute presentation and facilitate a 10-minute dialogue and discussion with the class. You will be graded on both your own presentation and your participation in the dialogues facilitated by your classmates. Attendance is mandatory on all days. Within groups, group members do not always participate equally in the preparation of group projects; however, all group members

share equally in the final grade. To assess individual contributions to the group project, each student will be asked to rate the extent to which each of his or her group members contributed to the semester project. The average of the ratings you receive from members of your group, coupled with my own evaluation of your contribution, will be factored into your final assignment grade.

Article Presentations (50 points each) You will sign up for an article and presentation date at the beginning of the semester (they cannot be changed). You must create a ONE PAGE hand out (can be front and back) that clearly summarizes the main argument, ideas, and terms presented in the article you have chosen. The handout must have a full citation of the article. The presentations to the class should be no more than 3 minutes. I need a print out copy of this on the day of your presentation and an electronic copy emailed to me.

Exams (2 @ 150 points each = 300 points total) There will be two exams in this course. They are not comprehensive. They will be essay-based examinations and you will receive a list of the possible concepts and questions ahead of time.

Engagement (50 points) This class relies on your thorough participation and critical engagement with text and exercise materials. I expect you to come to class having completed the readings for that unit. Students are expected to attend all lectures and to complete all required readings. Material will be presented in the lecture that is not in the readings and **will be** addressed in the exams. The engagement grade is composed of student contributions to class discussions and various engagement assignments given throughout the semester. In addition, you will be graded on in-class assignments and discussions for which you will lose credit if you are not present. I also reserve the right to bump up the borderline grades of students who participate most actively in class discussions.

COURSE POLICIES

Attendance

There are consequences if you miss class that you should consider while you make your decision about your attendance to this course:

- You are responsible for all information communicated in class, whether or not you are in attendance.
- You are responsible for participating in activities and discussion, and missing class will impact your engagement grade in this course.
- I do not lecture on the readings, so the information given in class is not something you can just get from the readings.

- If you miss a class, please get notes from a classmate rather than asking me for notes.
- You will not be able to make up exams or engagement activities.

Attendance on presentation days, even when you are not speaking, is required. Failure to attend presentation days will result in a ten-point deduction from your own grade for each day missed.

Late Work

Tell me ahead of time if you're going to miss a major assignment. Excusable reasons for missing are, to be frank, few and far between, but include unexpected sickness **proven** by the presentation of a doctor's note, family emergency **proven** through presentation of an obituary, etc., or a university-sanctioned activity like a game or a concert **proven** by a note from an advisor or an instructor. Under these circumstances, I will work out a way for you to make up the assignment. Make-up speeches are reserved for **students who are in good standing** in the course, provide me with an **outline of their assignment within twenty-four hours** of missing it, and **schedule a make-up within one week**.

Missed assignments that are not accompanied by proof of excused absence (and an outline if it is a speech or presentation) may be made up within the week they are missed for the **maximum grade of a C**. (Life happens, but not without consequences.)

Other major course assignments will be due in-class at the start of class (unless due through Moodle at class time). If you can't make the in-class deadline, you can turn the assignment in for **increasingly fewer points** throughout that day, up **until 5pm**. After that point, work will no longer be accepted without proof of extenuating circumstances (see above).

Quality of Written Work

Take pride in the quality of your work in this class. Written work must be spell-checked, grammar-checked, and proofread: The quality of your writing will affect your grade.

All written work must be typed in 12-point font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, with a clear heading up at the top. Your name must be included.

Presentation Day Etiquette

On the day of your presentation, you should arrive in appropriate attire (i.e. business casual, or at least not in pajamas) prepared to give your speech.

Your role as an audience member is equally important to a successful presentation. As I indicate above, attendance on debate days is mandatory for everyone. You are also responsible for being a supportive audience member. This means that working on homework, typing on a lap top, text messaging, walking in late while someone is speaking, sleeping, or simply looking like anything

other than engaged in your classmates' work will be considered rude and treated accordingly, probably with some species of public shaming and/or ridicule.

Grade Discussions and Appeals

I do not discuss grades over e-mail or in class. If you would like to speak with me about an exam, assignment, final grade, or any other graded material you must come to my office and speak with me face-to-face. If you cannot come to my office hours, I will gladly schedule an appointment that works with your schedule.

If you wish to appeal a grade on an assignment, you must submit a grade appeal within 7 days of receiving the grade, and you must follow these procedures:

- Wait at least 24 hours before setting up an appointment and submitting your written grade appeal to insure that you have time to carefully read and consider the feedback. Focus less on explaining that you deserve a certain grade, and more on proving that you accomplished specific objectives that you were not given the appropriate credit for. Make sure to cite specific instances from your assignment to provide support for these claims.
- After reading my feedback, submit a typed, written appeal that identifies the specific issue in question (e.g. exam question, etc.) and explains the specific and well-supported reasons you believe the grade should be changed. Please refer to any class materials that support your rationale for a change.
- The written appeal should be submitted at least 24 hours prior to the appointment.
- When you arrive for the scheduled appointment, bring in your graded copy of the item in question (e.g., exam, etc.) and any additional evidence to support your claims and be ready to present them.
- After meeting with you, I may wish to contemplate the matter. In any case, I will decide within two school days whether to change or uphold the grade.
- I will provide you with a written justification of my decision. We need to meet within one week (7 days) of the grade's issue.
- Grade appeals will not be considered after that "statute of limitations" has expired.
- If we cannot come to an agreement, you are welcome to follow the formal grade appeal procedure as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

You may feel compelled to compare grades with others in the class. If both of you are fine doing this, then there is nothing I can do to stop you. However, keep in mind that you are appealing your grade, not how you were graded compared to others. I strive to make sure grades are individual, rather than comparative, evaluations.

Technology and Electronics in the Classroom

You are more than welcome to use technology in this classroom (Laptops, iPads, etc) as long as it does not serve as a distraction to you and other students. However, if your cell phone rings during class I reserve the right to answer it or take it for the remainder of class. If you use a

laptop to take notes, that is fine, but it should not be out during discussions or engagement activities. Also, if I catch you on facebook, twitter, instagram, or something unrelated to class—I will give one warning and if it happens again the rest of the class will lose the privilege to take notes electronically.

Waiting Policy

Class members should wait 15 minutes for me in the event I am late (which I do not at all foresee). After that period of time, you should consider class cancelled.

Netiquette

Think about how you communicate to your instructors and colleagues in person and via e-mail. When sending E-Mails:

- Address me professionally in e-mails (ex: “Hello, Dr. Mack”)
- In an e-mail, please sign your name (I might think LSUcutiepie@gmail.com is spam and delete it).
- Check your grammar.
- Remember tone is harder to make out in e-mail. Assume a polite and professional tone, and my response will be the same.
- Make sure to include any necessary background information needed for me to “make sense” of what you are e-mailing about. Also, make sure to be clear (just like in an essay) of what you want out of the e-mail.
- Do not text me from your phone in all caps, or in broken English. Always use proper punctuation, complete spellings, etc...
- Courtesy in this class gives most people 24 hours to respond to e-mail. I will not assume you will get an e-mail in less time; don’t assume I will either. Weekends may take longer.

If you fail to follow these guidelines, I will not answer your e-mail.

Academic Misconduct

Don’t plagiarize. Any student found to have turned in material not their own (either downloaded from the internet or written by another student) will immediately be reported to the Dean of Students. You can find the official LSU policies on plagiarism here:

<http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html> . **Your work would be considered as plagiarism in part or entirely if it involves any of the following:**

- Submitting work that was written by someone other than you (an online source, a friend, etc.).
- Submitting work in which you use the ideas, metaphors or reasoning style of another, but do not cite that source and/or place that source in your list of references. Simply rewording a sentence does not make work your own.
- Submitting work in which you “cut and paste” or use the exact words of a source and you do not put the words within quotation marks, use footnotes or in-text citations, and place the source in your list of references.

- Submitting work that you have written together with a friend as if it was solely your own intellectual property.
- Submitting work for COMM 2063 that you wrote verbatim for another class.

Students With Disabilities

Louisiana State University is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities. The syllabus is available in alternate formats upon request. If you are seeking classroom accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act, you are required to register with Disability Services in 115 Johnston Hall. Their phone number is 225-578-5919 and website is www.lsu.edu/disability. To receive academic accommodations for this class, please obtain the proper Disability Services forms and meet with me at the beginning of the semester.

Majoring in Communication Studies

Business leaders and other professionals recognize the importance of developing communication skills and analysis. Alan Greenspan, for example, stated, “To succeed, you will soon learn, as I did, the importance of a solid foundation in the basics of education – literacy, both verbal and numerical, and communication skills.” We hope this course contributes to your success.

To learn more about communication, you may want to major or minor in the Department of Communication Studies. The program explores how people sustain and change, experience, and make sense of the world through symbolic action. Students develop conceptual skills to analyze written, oral, and visual messages. Students gain practical experience in such areas such as public speaking, group decision-making, performance, and film. Such skills are elemental to careers in business, government, law, social services, and the arts.

A major in Communication Studies requires 36 hours including 12 hours of core classes and 12 hours at the 3000 or 4000 level. A minor requires 15 hours with one core class and 6 hours at the 3000 level or above.

More information is available at www.lsu.edu/cmst or by contacting our undergraduate advisor Mr. Kent Filbel (kfilli@lsu.edu), whose hours are posted at his office, 135 Coates Hall

COURSE SCHEDULE

Please Note: You are responsible for all readings. Please complete the reading assignment *before* the listed class. The syllabus is provisional and is subject to revision as necessary. Additional readings may be assigned from time to time, and/or assigned readings may be omitted.

All readings are available on Moodle.

Roughly each week we will engage a different “unit” on an area pertaining to sexual communication. The readings are due by the first day of the unit.

Date/UNIT	Topic	Readings Due
M 8/22	Course Introduction	
W 8/24 – F 8/26	What is Sex?	Jensen, “What is Sexuality for?” Excerpt from <i>Getting Off</i> Schpancer, “Why do we have sex?” https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/insight-therapy/201204/why-do-we-have-sex
M 8/29 – F 9/2	Sexualization & Sexual Scripts	Attwood, Sexed Up Jensen, “We are what we masturbate to” Excerpt from <i>Getting Off</i>
M 9/5	Labor Day – No Class	
W 9/7 – F 9/9	The Birds and The Bees	Excerpt from Risky Lessons
M 9/12 – F 9/15	Communicating Sexual Identity	Manning, J. (2015). “Communicating Sexual Identities: A Typology of Coming out.” <i>Sexuality & Culture</i> , 19, 122-138.
M 9/26 – W 9/28	Negotiating Sexual Intimacy	Excerpt from Mating in Captivity
F 9/30 – W 10/5	Sexual Coercion & Communicating Consent	Mackinnon, <i>Rape: Coercion & Consent</i> Shulevitz, “Regulating Sex,” in <i>The New York Times</i> , http://www.nytimes.com/2015/06/28/opinion/sunday/judith-shulevitz-regulating-sex.html?_r=0

		Keenan, "Affirmative Consent: Are Students Really Asking?" in <i>The New York Times</i> , http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/02/education/edlife/affirmative-consent-are-students-really-asking.html?_r=0
F 10/7	Fall Holiday – No Class	
M 10/10	Exam I Review	
W 10/12	Exam I	
F 10/14 – M 10/17	Communication in Casual Sexual Relationships	Taylor, "She Can Play that Game, Too," in <i>The New York Times</i> , http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/14/fashion/sex-on-campus-she-can-play-that-game-too.html?pagewanted=all Wade, "The Hookup Elites," in <i>Slate.com</i> , http://www.slate.com/articles/double_x/doublex/2013/07/hookup_culture_for_the_white_wealthy_and_beautiful.html Robin, "Its not about the sex," from <i>Salon.com</i> http://www.salon.com/2015/03/08/it's_not_about_the_sex_the_case_for_open_relationships_partner/
W 10/19 – F 10/21	Communication in Committed Sexual Relationships	Christopher, F. S., & Sprecher, S. (2000). Sexuality in marriage, dating, and other relationships: A decade review. <i>Journal of Marriage and the Family</i> , 62, 999-1017. Khazan, "Multiple Lovers, Without Jealous." From <i>The Atlantic</i> , http://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2014/07/multiple-lovers-no-jealousy/374697/
M 10/24 – F 10/28	Communicating about Sexual Health	Curry, "Reluctant Social Commentary of a HIV-Positive Twenty Something" from <i>The Advocate</i> http://www.advocate.com/commentary/tyler-curry/2012/12/03/reluctant-social-commentary-

		newly-hiv-positive-20-something
M 10/31 – W 11/2	Technology & Sexual Communication	Juzwiak, “where is Our Dependency on Hook-up Apps Taking us?” from Gawker.com http://gawker.com/where-is-our-dependency-on-hook-up-apps-taking-us-1784537327 Gaudiosi, “How Virtual Relaity Sex Edutainment is revolutionizing porn” from <i>Rolling Stone</i> , http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/features/virtual-reality-sex-edutainment-is-revolutionizing-porn-w432811
F 11/4	Exam II Review	
M 11/7	Exam II	
W 11/9 – F 11/11	National Communication Association Conference – No Class	
M 11/14	Workshop: Sexuality In Context Presentations	
W 11/16 - M 11/21	Sexuality In Context Presentations	
W 11/23 – 11/25	Thanksgiving Holiday – No class	
M 11/28 – F 12/2	Sexuality In Context Presentations	
TH 12/8	Sexuality In Context Presentations	(Final Exam slot: 12:30-2:30pm)