Cluster: Sexualities
Title of course: Topics in Sexuality Studies
Course Number: WS 399
Proposing Faculty: Ann Mussey
Cluster Coordinator: Ann Mussey

Cluster Course to New Cluster

Other clusters this course is assigned to:

Non 'U' course proposed to Cluster

Removal

UNST Committee-- PASS: Yes ☐ No ☐
If no, reason: __________________________________________________________

UCC Committee-- PASS: Yes ☐ No ☐
If no, reason: __________________________________________________________
PROPOSING FACULTY: Ann Mussey

COURSE TITLE AND NUMBER: WS 399U Topics in Sexuality Studies

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OBTAIN CHAIR AND CLUSTER COORDINATOR SIGNATURES BEFORE SUBMITTING TO UNIVERSITY STUDIES OFFICE


. DATE: ___________.

CLUSTER COORDINATOR: Ann Mussey . DATE: 10/1/04.

All changes to Clusters must be approved by PSU's Senate Curriculum Committee.

THE ORIGINAL + 12 COPIES OF THE PROPOSAL MUST BE RECEIVED AT UNIVERSITY STUDIES (CH 163)

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COURSE APPROVED FOR CLUSTER INCLUSION

CHAIR, CLUSTER COORDINATORS: ________________________ . DATE: ___________.

CHAIR, UNST COMMITTEE: ________________________________ . DATE: ___________.


PROPOSING FACULTY: Ann Mussey, Women’s Studies

1. THE COURSE

A. WS 399U Topics in Sexuality Studies

B. DEVELOPMENT: This course will be developed by a group of faculty who will rotate a variety of special topics courses related to sexuality studies. Because the course offerings in the Sexualities cluster are limited, this special topics course will offer some flexibility in terms of faculty and scheduling. Course topics would include: Sexuality and Citizenship; Sexuality and Narrative; Sexual Migration and the Global Economy; Sexuality in Latin America; Politics of Sexuality in the U.S.

C. AVAILABILITY: Once a year

D. PREREQUISITES: none

2. COURSE DESCRIPTION: This course will examine the inter-relationship between sexuality and society using a variety of sources including literature, film, historical narratives, political debates, and science and various theoretical frames such as queer theory, feminist theory, critical theory. Specific topics will vary.

[This course will be similar to WS 308U/ENG 308U Topics in Gender, Literature, and Popular Culture in which the course title and catalog description stay the same, but the topics vary.]

EXAMPLE OF COURSE OUTLINE FOR ONE PARTICULAR TOPIC.

WS 399U Topics in Sexuality Studies: Sexuality and Narrative
Instructor: Marcia Klotz

When Freud was once asked what traits humans share with mammals, he did not reply, as one might have expected, that we all share certain basic drives (the Triebe that motored his famous economic model of the human psyche), but rather that we find our common experience with other animals at the level of primal fantasies. In that answer, Freud reversed the common understanding: animal needs, including sex, do not give birth to fantasy, often structured as a narrative, but rather the opposite. But this answer, far from solving the riddle, only leads to a chicken-and-egg question of origins. Desire may stem from primal fantasies, structured in narrative form, yet that fantasy itself can only sustain itself as it appeals to desire. Thus, sexuality and narrative appear in a relationship much like that of the two hands of Escher’s famous sketch, drawing one another. The goal of this course is to explore the various and complex interrelationship between sexuality and narrative. What kinds of stories do we all tell to make sense of our sexuality? How is our sexuality itself put together by the kinds of stories we find in the world around us? Focusing primarily on the western tradition, it will take a transhistorical approach, juxtaposing works from antiquity with those from the present. We will examine various kinds of texts, including works of literature, psychological writings, works of theory, religious manuscripts, film and erotic fantasy.
Meeting twice a week, we will begin with Freud’s *Outline of a Theory of Psychoanalysis*, examining how the Oedipus complex, the basis, for Freud, of all human sexuality, is formed around a tightly-woven, supposedly universal, narrative. We will then read Sophocles’ *Oedipus Rex*, examining the centrality of that Greek story in Freud’s theory, discussing whether he reads it correctly. Moving on to the Christian tradition, we will examine how sex is narrativized as the origin of guilt or sin, beginning with excerpts from the Bible (Song of Solomon, excerpts from the letters of St. Paul), and comparing them with gospels that were excluded from today’s canon. The writings of Saint Augustine and Nathaniel Hawthorne’s *The Scarlet Letter* will follow, illustrating how the doctrine of sexual sin has changed over time. As a point of comparison, the *Kama Sutra* appears next on the syllabus, alongside excerpts from the first volume of Foucault’s *History of Sexuality*, in which he draws a stark distinction between a social form of sexuality that functions as an *ars erotica* and that of our own *scientia sexualis*.

We will then move on to discuss the various forms of erotic desire that are assumed to constitute an array of sexual identities in the contemporary era, examining the different narratives associated with them. We will begin with “homosexuality,” contrasting how same-sex desire is presented in Plato’s *Symposium* with more recent texts. A discussion of Ann Bannon’s 1950s pulp novel, *Odd Girl Out* alongside the recent film, *Urbania*, will illustrate the similarities and differences between contemporary narratives of lesbian and gay male desire. Taking a step back, we will look at how monogamous heterosexuality came to be classified as normative in the 19th century, while homosexuality appeared as one among many deviations or perversions (Krafft-Ebing’s *Psychopathia Sexualis*). We will then look at the narrative origins of some of the other “deviations,” including sadism (the Marquis de Sade), masochism (Leopold Sacher-Masoch), and more contemporary attempts to understand those forms of pleasure in relation to each other (Gilles Deleuze). The concluding section of the course will return to the question of origins, asking what the role of sexual innocence is in constructing narratives of childhood. We will compare the medieval pastoral romance, “Daphnis and Chloe,” with contemporary representations of childhood as a realm that lies outside of the sexual. Judith Levine’s journalistic study *Harmful to Minors*, will be contrasted with a film that violates that prohibition, “L.I.E.”

Students will be asked to write a short response paper for the readings each week. There will be a midterm and a final paper.

**Sophocles, Oedipus Rex**  
Sigmund Freud, *An Outline of a Theory of Psychoanalysis*

The Bible (Song of Solomon, Paul’s letters)  
Gnostic Gospels

Saint Augustine, *The Confessions*  
Nathaniel Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*

**Kama Sutra**  

**Plato, The Symposium**  
The Gay Rights Manifesto

Ann Bannon, *Odd Girl Out*  
Film: *Urbania*

**Krafft-Ebing, Psychopathia Sexualis** (excerpts)  
Marquis de Sade, *Philosophy in the Boudoir*
Leopold Sacher-Masoch, *Venus in Furs*
Gilles Deleuze: "Coldness and Cruelty: Sacher-Masoch’s Venus in Furs"

"Daphnis and Chloe"
Judith Levine, *Harmful to Minors: The Dangers of Protecting Children from Sex*

Film: *L.I.E.*
Conclusion Discussion

3. GENERAL EDUCATION GOALS.

A. COURSE CONTENT & SUITABILITY FOR CLUSTER
   The topics for this course will vary, but all content will be related to the study of sexuality within a social, historical and/or cultural context.

B. UNST GOALS
   *Inquiry and Critical Thinking*: The course will construct a series of challenges to commonplace assumption about sexuality: sexuality as a transhistorical given; sex essentialism; sex and gender dichotomies; the presumed congruence of the sexed body, desire, gender display, and the necessity of identity politics.

   *Communication*: This course will rely on interactive learning methods, such as small group discussions and group projects which encourage collaborative learning. There will also be a variety of writing to learn exercises including focused free writing, in-class reaction writing, short essays, as well as more conventional research writing.

   *Human Experience*: Sexuality is a very human experience. Students will explore variations in sexual expression, examine the narratives we all use to explain who we are as sexual beings, and work with first-person representations of sexual subjectivity.

   *Ethical Issues and Social Responsibility*: Students will examine the social implications of the hierarchy of value place on sexual behaviors and identities in history, science, politics, the legal justice system, and familial relationships. Students will be encouraged to consider possible positive interventions. One of the primary purposes of this course will be to affirm those students who do not fit the heteronormative ideals and support more inclusive attitudes and behaviors among all.

C. CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT
   Teaching strategies will include student-centered learning techniques such as facilitated discussion, small group projects, active classroom exercises (e.g. learning games, theater of the oppressed), student presentations, and interactive panels with representatives from community organizations.