Sex, Power, and Politics
Women's Studies
San Diego State University
Spring 2013

Professor Shogofa Abassi
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Course Description:
Understanding power relations requires an attention to context, particularly the social values, cultural mores, and communal norms that shape our society as well as and sense of self. In this course we will explore the historical and theoretical bases of power differential with regard to sex and gender as well as their social and political implications. This course is designed to help students understand the processes by which “sexuality” (understood broadly to include gender and sexual difference) is constituted through relations of power and comes to shape the lives of everyday citizens. To that end, we will consider questions such as, how do theories of sexuality inform political leadership and public policy? How do these theories, and the policies they engender, perpetuate or minimize relations of subordination and domination? How, in other words, do our gender norms undermine or enable human flourishing and freedom? And what, if anything, can or should be done in response? The course brings works of feminist and political theory together with the study of contemporary public policy controversies. Students will have the opportunity to explore theories of sexuality and consider questions such as, are men and women born or made? Is biology destiny or is it socially constructed? And what difference does difference make? In addition we will examine the relationship between theory and practice and explore the ways in which theoretical conceptions of sexuality inform and/or are challenged by leadership practices and public policies.

Required Texts:
All required reading will be provided electronically.

Classroom Etiquette: Students are to conduct themselves in a manner that will not detract from the learning environment of the classroom. Except in cases of emergency, students are expected to remain in the classroom for the duration of the class. Tardiness is considered rude and disrupting to the instructor and to other students. Please arrive on time.
Old School: or other electronics may be used during lectures. EVER. i.e. : Upon entering classroom:

• NO Cell phones
• NO Laptops
• NO texting in class
• NO Headphones
• NO I-Pods or I-Pads
• NO Blackberries
• NO other electronic device
Plagiarism:
Plagiarism will not be tolerated. Plagiarism is the use of ideas belonging to someone else as your own in your written work. When using another individual’s ideas in your work, you must acknowledge this by using the appropriate citations. Students who violate the university’s policies on plagiarism or academic dishonesty will receive disciplinary and/or academic sanctions, according to university provisions. Penalties for plagiarism range from an F in the course to expulsion from the university. (refer to SDSU General Catalog)

Students with Special Needs:
Students who need accommodation of their disabilities should contact me privately to discuss specific strategies for accommodation; however, they must have received authorization beforehand. If you have a disability, but have not contacted Student Disability Services (619-594-6473, Calpulli Center, Suite 3101), please do so before making an appointment with me.

General Education Course:
This is one of the General Education Courses that fulfill the 9-unit requirement for Explorations in General Education that take the goals and skills of GE Foundations courses to a more advanced level. Your three upper division courses in Explorations will provide greater interdisciplinary, more complex and in-depth theory, deeper investigation of local problems, and wider awareness of global challenges. More extensive reading, written analysis involving complex comparisons, well-developed arguments, considerable bibliography, and use of technology are appropriate in many Explorations courses. This is an Explorations course in Social and Behavioral Sciences. Completing this course will help you learn to do the following with greater depth: 1) explore and recognize basic terms, concepts, and domains of the social and behavioral sciences; 2) comprehend diverse theories and methods of the social and behavioral sciences; 3) Identify human behavioral patterns across space and time and discuss their interrelatedness and distinctiveness; 4) enhance your understanding of the social world through the application of conceptual frameworks from the social and behavioral sciences to first-hand engagement with contemporary issues.

Assignments:

1. **Class Participation**: 10%
   This class will be run in an interactive manner. That means your participation in discussion is absolutely key to making this class work. Please be sure to have done the readings for the day assigned and bring those readings with you to class. Keep in mind that participation grades will be based on the *quality* of contributions made to discussion not simply quantity or attendance.

2. **Class Facilitation**: 10%
   Each student, partnered with at least one other student, will be required to facilitate one class meeting of your choosing. Students will work together to present/lead class discussion on the key ideas of the reading or video, raise questions for the discussion, provide additional readings or information not included in the syllabus, etc. While a good analysis of the material will suffice, presentations that pose critical questions in respect to the topic will be particularly productive. More details to follow.

3. **Midterm #1**: 20% The exams will cover lectures, videos, class discussions, student discussions and presentation, and the readings. Format of the exams: Short answer questions and one essay

4. **Final Exam #2**: 25% The exams will cover lectures, videos, class discussions, student discussions and presentation, and the readings. Format of the exams: Short answer questions and one essay (not cumulative)
5.4-6 Page Paper 10%: A choice of topics will be offered in the coming weeks.

6. Take Home “Quizzes”: 25% Quizzes are tools used to ensure students keep up with reading and other assignments and are given at the instructor’s discretion. The quizzes are to be done at home.

**Tentative Class Schedule:**

Subject to change at discretion of instructor

**Week 1: 1/22**

**Pre-history and History**

Assignment for week 2:

- Viewing:
  - “Sex in the Bible”: [http://www.youtube.com/verify_age?next_url=/watch%3Fv%3DBky0avZxNHw](http://www.youtube.com/verify_age?next_url=/watch%3Fv%3DBky0avZxNHw)

- Reading:
  1. Chris Knight: “Early human kinship was matrilineal” [pdf](#)
  2. Lerner: Creation of Patriarchy: "Introduction"
  4. Summery of Lerner's Creation of Patriarchy (no outline necessary)

**Option:**


   [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yU1bEmq_pdf](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yU1bEmq_pdf) (only watch part I)

**Week 2: 1/29**

**Myth and Religion**

Assignment for week 3

- Okin, “Philosopher Queens and Private Wives”
- To be announced

Optional but recommended: Roger Stah: “ Militainment, inc”:

[http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2373519247173568764](http://video.google.com/videoplay?docid=-2373519247173568764) 1 hour 22-

**Week 3: 2/5**

**Private property**

Assignment for week 4

- Richardson, “Contemporary Feminist perspectives on Social Contract Theory” [pdf](#) (I may change this)
- Brown, “Civilizational Delusions: Secularism, Tolerance, Equality” [Pdf](#)
- Videos:

Optional but recommended: Duke, 2009 Feminist Theory Workshop Wendy Brown:

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqCP5AJVk_A](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sqCP5AJVk_A)

**Week 4: 2/12**

**Political Theory**

Assignment for week 5:

- Fausto-Sterling: “The Five Sexes, Why Male and Female is not Enough” [pdf](#)
• Video: Steven Rose: “Can Genetics Explain Human Nature?”
  • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DswL_7dnI4A&feature=relmfu
  • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s7-I8ba1wLE&feature=relmfu
  • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c9ZAzeneo2Q&feature=relmfu
  • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V3RHGT2ImlU&feature=relmfu
  • http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K6E_Oniy0vc&feature=relmfu

Week 5: 2/19  
**Biology, Sex and Gender**

**Assignment for week 6:**


• Video: Sut Jhally: “The Codes of Gender”:
  http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=238&template=PDGCommTemplates/HTN/Item_Preview.html

• Optional:
  • *The Times of Harvey Milk* (film)

Week 6: 2/26  
**Queer Theory**

**Assignment for week 7:**

• Susan Bordo’s *Unbearable Weight*
  • “Introduction”
  • “In the Empire of Images”

• Simone de Beauvoir: *The Second Sex*: Introduction

Week 7: 3/5  
**Constructing Women**

**Assignment for week 8:**

• Exam 1: 3/5

• Videos:
  • Katz: “Tough Guise”
    http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=211&template=PDGCommTemplates/HTN/Item_Preview.html
    (or you can go to the library to watch the video)
  • Jensen: “Feminism and Masculinity”
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qvZee1gh3N4 (101:35)
  • Kimmel “Theorizing Masculinity” : NeoNazis (just the section Kimmel speaks: 24:40-50:30)
    http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JHBJF_bVO2g&feature=relmfu

**Optional but recommended:** Enloe, “Masculinity as a Foreign Policy Issue”

Week 8: 3/12  
**Constructing Men**

**Assignment for week 9:**

• “The Price of Pleasure: Pornography, Sexuality, and Relationships"
  http://www.mediaed.org/cgi-bin/commerce.cgi?preadd=action&key=235

• Optional:
  • *Live Nude Girls Unite!* (film)
Week 9: 3/19

**Pornography**

Assignment for week 10

- Bordo, “Are Mother’s Persons?”

**Optional:** *If These Walls Could Talk* (film: Susan Nanus

I. Marlene King)

Week 10: 3/26

**Reproductive Rights**

Assignment for week 11

- McLaren: “Gender equality and the economic empowerment of women.”
- Roberts: “Black Women and the Pill”
- Turcotti: “Contextualizing Petro-Sexual Politics”

Week 11: 4/2

**Race, Reproduction, and Sexuality**

Assignment for week 12

**Videos:**

1. Neferti Tadiar: gendered Labor:
   
   [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-WcJDLoEXs&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_-WcJDLoEXs&feature=relmfu)

2. Naomi Klein: "No Logo":
   
   - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDTG_e7I4hU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lDTG_e7I4hU)
   - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6cXRqTShoo&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c6cXRqTShoo&feature=related)
   - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnXcDdeuovY&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KnXcDdeuovY&feature=relmfu)
   - [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b920MZ5Lm8Q&feature=relmfu](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b920MZ5Lm8Q&feature=relmfu)

**optional but recommended:**


Week 12: 4/16

**Gender, Globalization, and Global Justice**

**Videos:**

- Adam Curtis: “A Century of the Self”
  
  [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjFL02NmBrc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YjFL02NmBrc) 235 minutes

Week 13: 4/22

**Media**

- Folbre: *Greed, Lust & Gender:* “Introduction”

**optional but recommended:** Video:

- Conversations with history: Joan Wallach Scott: “Politics of the Veil”:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MrknwNl818Y
• Afghanistan’s Untold Story:

Week 14: 4/29  Media/ The Economy
• Nancy Fraser: “Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History” pdf
• John Locke: Money Pdf
• Video: Nancy Fraser: http://www.youtube.com/watch?
  feature=player_embedded&v=RKeyvFyHVrM

Week 15: 5/6  The Economy
• Study for Final

Final Exam: 05/14/13  1900-2100