sociology of sexualities

Winter 2023

**Instructor:** Tina Fetner

**Email:** [tina.fetner@mcmaster.ca](mailto:tina.fetner@mcmaster.ca)

**Lecture:** Mondays 10:30am-12:20pm   
**Office Hours:** Mondays 2:00-3:00pm

**TA:** Yena Lee  
**TA email:** [soc3U03@mcmaster.ca](mailto:soc3U03@mcmaster.ca)  
**TA online:** Wednesdays 10:30-11:20am

# Course Description

Sexuality may seem to be a personal, private, intimate topic reserved for diaries and best friends. However, in this course, we will see that sexuality is really a social phenomenon, encompassing a broad range of emotions, actions, identities and communities. We use sexualities to define ourselves and the world we live in, to draw boundaries between types of people, and to mark borders between wrong and right. In this course, we will explore the social aspects of sexuality and consider how sexual experiences are shaped by, and interpreted through, historically specific social contexts.

Using the tools of sociology, we will analyze gender and sexual behaviors, identities and communities. We will examine the social organization of sexuality and how sexuality contributes to social organization. We will consider various types of social control over sexual behavior, as well as responses to that control. We will enter into the hidden worlds of sexual expression and exchange, and we will keep our eyes as much on the taboos themselves as on the actions they censure.

# Course Objectives

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

* discuss and evaluate sociological theories relating to sex and sexuality
* understand empirical approaches to examining sexuality, including behaviour, identity, desire, and community
* communicate concepts related to the sociology of sexualities clearly and effectively
* evaluate evidence and logic for claims relating to the sociology of sexualities
* understand complex relationships of sexuality and inequality

# Required Materials and Texts

* Kathleen J. Fitzgerald and Kandice Grossman. 2021. *Sociology of Sexualities, 2nd edition*. Sage Publishing.

While you can purchase this textbook at the McMaster Campus Store, please be aware that an electronic version of this book is available for a 180-day rental for USD $50 on the publisher’s website: <https://us.sagepub.com/en-us/nam/sociology-of-sexualities/book267539>.   
*Other options may also be available. Note that this course uses the* ***2nd edition.***

* Additional readings will be posted on Avenue to Learn.

# Class Format

This online course is *mostly* delivered asynchronously, but it operates on a schedule similar to an in-person class. I recommend you stick to our class schedule: Mondays 10:30-12:20pm and Wednesdays 10:30-11:30am. I will be available online during the Monday session, and your teaching assistant will be available during the Wednesday session.

Lectures will be posted on Mondays each week on Avenue to Learn. Your professor and teaching assistant will also be available by email at [soc3U03@mcmaster.ca](mailto:soc3U03@mcmaster.ca). We are very happy to talk about the course material, answer questions, or discuss something related to the course that interests you.

# Course Evaluation – Overview

1. Take-home midterm: 30%
2. Timed online exam: 35%
3. Book review: 35%

# Weekly Course Schedule and Required Readings

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Week 1** | **Introductions** |
| **9-Jan** | No readings assigned. |
|  | **Topic:** What is social about sexuality? Plus, introductions and information about this course. |
|  |  |
| **Week 2** | **The social structure of sexuality** |
| **16-Jan** | Karin Martin and Emily Kazyak. 2009. "Hetero-romantic Love and Heterosexiness in Children's G-rated Films." *Gender & Society* 23: 315-336. Available on Avenue. |
|  | Fetner, Tina. 2022. “Feminist Identity and Sexual Behavior: The Intimate Is Political.” *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 51(1):441–52. Available on Avenue. |
|  | **Topic**: How is sexuality (i.e., sexual identity, behaviour, and desire) socially organized? What are the social forces that shape patterns of sexuality? |
|  |  |
| **Week 3** | **Social construction of sexuality** |
| **23-Jan** | Robinson, Margaret. 2020. "Two-Spirit Identity in a Time of Gender Fluidity." *Journal of Homosexuality* 67:1675-1690. Available on Avenue. |
|  | Shamus Khan. 2015. "Not Born This Way." Aeon.co. Available on Avenue. |
|  | **Topic:** What do we mean by "social construction of sexuality" and how does that relate to sexual identity, behaviour and desire? |
|  |  |
|  |  |
| **Week 4** | **The science (and social science) of sexuality** |
| **30-Jan** | *Sociology of Sexualities*, Chapter 2: "The Science of Sexuality" |
|  | **Topic:** How does what we know about sexuality evolve over time? How is it shaped by historical and social contexts? |
|  |  |
| **Week 5** | **States, Politics, and the Economy** |
| **6-Feb** | *Sociology of Sexualities*, First half of Chapter 4: "Social Class, Space, Place, and Sexuality" (up to *Class, Poverty and Sexual Rights)* |
|  | Robin Jarvis Brownlie. 2005. "Intimate Surveillance: Indian Affairs, Colonization, and the Regulation of Aboriginal Women’s Sexuality." Ch 7 in Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale, eds. *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*. Vancouver: UBC Press. Available on Avenue. |
|  | **Topic**: What are sex and gender? In what ways are gender and sexuality mutually constitutive social institutions? |
|  |  |
| **Week 6** | **Take-home midterm due today** |
| **13-Feb** |  |
|  |  |
| **20-Feb** | **READING WEEK - no class** |
|  |  |
| **Week 7** | **Sexuality, gender and inequality** |
| **27-Feb** | Andrejek, Nicole, Tina Fetner, and Melanie Heath. 2022. “Climax as Work: Heteronormativity, Gender Labor, and the Gender Gap in Orgasms.” *Gender & Society* 36(2):189–213. Available on Avenue. |
|  | Waite, Sean and Nicole Denier. 2015. "Gay Pay for Straight Work: Mechanisms Generating Disadvantage." *Gender & Society* 29(4):561-588. Available on Avenue |
|  | **Topic**: How does sexuality operate as a vector of inequality? |
|  |  |
| **Week 8** | **Sexual communities** |
| **6-Mar** | *Sociology of Sexualities*, Second half of Chapter 4: "Social Class, Space, Place, and Sexuality" |
|  | **Topic**: How does sexuality organize the physical world around us? |
|  |  |
| **Week 9** | **LGBTQ activism and sexuality-based mobilization** |
| **13-Mar** | *Sociology of Sexualities*, Chapter 6: "LGBTQ and Sexuality-Based Mobilization and Activism" |
|  | **Topic**: How have historical shifts in lesbian and gay communities been produced by LGBTQ social movements? What role did anti-LGBTQ social movements play in sexuality-based mobilization? |
|  |  |
| **Week 10** | **Sexual cultures** |
| **20-Mar** | Nicole Andrejek. 2021. “Girls’ Night Out: The Role of Women-Centered Friendship Groups in University Hookup Culture.” *Sociological Forum* 36(3): 758-775. *Available on Avenue to Learn.* |
|  | Sewell, Kelsey K. and Donald Strassberg. 2015. “How do Heterosexual Undergraduate Students Define Having Sex? A New Approach to an Old Problem.” *Journal of Sex Research* 52(5): 507-516. *Available on Avenue to Learn* |
|  | **Topic**: What are sexual cultures? What social forces produce them? How do we engage with various sexual cultures? |
|  |  |
| **Week 11** | **Mediated Sexual Cultures** |
| **27-Mar** | Paul J. Wright, Debby Herbenick & Robert S. Tokunaga. 2022. "Pornography and Women’s Experience of Mixed-Gender Sexual Choking/Strangulation." *Journal of Health* *Communication*, 27:173-182. Available on Avenue. |
|  | **Topic**: How do sexually explicit media depictions impact sexual desire/behaviour/culture? |
|  |  |
| **Week 12** | **Timed online exam takes place from 10:30am-12pm.** |
| **3-Apr** | Please schedule this synchronous component of the course in your calendar. |
|  |  |
| **Week 13** | **Class wrap-up** |
| **10-Apr** | What are the big ideas you should take away from this course? |
|  | **Book reviews due today.** |

# Course Policies

## Email requirements

Please consider email equivalent to any other form of written communication. Students who write to their professors and teaching assistants are expected to follow rules of spelling, grammar and punctuation. In addition, please include a proper greeting, such as "Hello, Dr. Fetner," and a closing that includes your full name, such as "Sincerely, Jane Lee." For some items, it is also helpful to have your student number.

Email failing to meet these standards may be returned unanswered. Email containing questions that can be answered by referring to this syllabus or to Avenue to Learn may not be answered. All email communication must come from your mcmaster.ca email account.

## Submission of Assignments

Assignments should be submitted via the appropriate Avenue to Learn assignment folder. Any technical difficulties should be reported to soc3U03@mcmaster.ca

## Late Assignments

For late assignments, please submit the assignment in Avenue to Learn. A late assignment will be marked down by five percentage points for each day it is late, including weekends and holidays, up to a maximum of five days, after which it will no longer be accepted. If you want to talk to us about the cause of your delay, or if you find you are blocked from submitting, please do not hesitate to email your teaching assistant at soc3U03@mcmaster.ca.

## Review of Marks

Your instructor and teaching assistant will be diligent in marking all assignments fairly and accurately. Nonetheless, occasionally students disagree with the marks they receive. When this occurs, we will be happy to review the mark of any assignment or exam, if the procedure outlined below is followed. ***Please note that when a mark is reviewed, the new mark may be lower than the original.***

To request a review of a mark, first give yourself a cooling-down period of 24 hours before submitting your request. Write a brief (<1-page) memo describing in detail the nature of the perceived marking error. Submit this memo to me via email as soc3U03@mcmaster.ca. You may submit requests for review no later than two weeks after assignments/exams are graded.

## Absences, Missed Work, Illness

In the event of missed work for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar “Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work”.

## Avenue to Learn

In this course we will be using Avenue to Learn. Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## Turnitin.com

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. Students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty. Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). For more information please refer to the [Turnitin.com Policy](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

# University Policies

## Academic Integrity Statement

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academiccredentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academiccredit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: “Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty”), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the [Academic Integrity Policy](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)**.**

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty

* Plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one’s own or for which other credit has been obtained.
* Improper collaboration in group work.
* Copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact [Student Accessibility Services](https://sas.mcmaster.ca/) (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca%20) to make arrangements with a Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University’s [*Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities*](http://www.mcmaster.ca/policy/Students-AcademicStudies/AcademicAccommodation-StudentsWithDisabilities.pdf)policy.

## Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous or Spiritual Observances (RISO)

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students requiring a [RISO](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2019/02/Academic-Accommodation-for-Religious-Indigenous-and-Spiritual-Observances-Policy-on.pdf) accommodation should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

## Conduct Expectations

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the [Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities](https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/app/uploads/Code-of-Student-Rights-and-Responsibilities.pdf) (the “Code”). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students’ access to these platforms.

## Copyright and Recording

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, **including lectures** by University instructors

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## Faculty of Social Sciences E-mail Communication Policy

Effective September 1, 2010, it is the policy of the Faculty of Social Sciences that all e-mail communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from the student’s own McMaster University e-mail account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. It is the student’s responsibility to ensure that communication is sent to the university from a McMaster account. If an instructor becomes aware that a communication has come from an alternate address, the instructor may not reply at his or her discretion.

## Course Modification

The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check his/her McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

## Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

## Grades

Grades will be based on the McMaster University grading scale:

| **MARK** | **GRADE** |
| --- | --- |
| 90-100 | A+ |
| 85-89 | A |
| 80-84 | A- |
| 77-79 | B+ |
| 73-76 | B |
| 70-72 | B- |
| 67-69 | C+ |
| 63-66 | C |
| 60-62 | C- |
| 57-59 | D+ |
| 53-56 | D |
| 50-52 | D- |
| 0-49 | F |