COURSE SYLLABUS

Department of Political Science
Dalhousie University

POLI 3427: The Sexualization of Western Political Thought: Sex, Race and Power

Class Time: Monday 2:30-5:30
Location: LSC C240

Professor: Dr. Margaret Denike
Office: Henry Hicks 362
Office Hrs: Monday 12:30-2:00 and Thursday 11:00-12:30, or by appointment
Email: m.denike@dal.ca (Please use this address, and NOT the one BLS, for any correspondence).
Phone: (902) 494-6298

Course Description:

This course will address the emergence and the impact of what remains among the most spectacular themes and analytic frameworks of contemporary social, political, and cultural theory: sex, sexuality, and sexual difference. Beginning with the work of Michel Foucault’s History of Sexuality and its genealogical approach, we will look at ways in which questions of sex and gender politics have been taken up in contemporary political, legal and philosophical discourses and practices. We will also examine applications of Foucault’s analysis of power, and particularly that of biopolitics, in different contexts on a range of contemporary issues.

The course will also look at the impact of feminism, anti-racism, and civil rights activism, in the rise of identity politics and human rights approaches within political theory, and critical literature on the representations of sexual and racial difference within mainstream western political thought.

Throughout the course, we will elucidate selected themes and issues that touch on sexual politics, such as slavery, same-sex marriage, obscenity, and polygamy, to highlight their developments and shifting configurations in western thought, and their role in shaping current political debates on the subject.

Evaluation Profile:

Essay 1 (2200 words max, excluding bibliography): 30%  Due Oct. 7
Essay 2 (2200 words max): 30%  Due Nov. 4
Test 40%  Nov. 25
Grading Profile

90-100 = A+   77-79.9 = B+   65-69.9 = C+   50-55.9 = D
85-89.9 = A   73-76.9 = B   59-61.9 = C   50 > F
80-84.9 = A-   70-72.9 = B-   56-58.9 = C

Participation:

The preparation and participation of each and every student in the class discussions will determine the success of the course. Students are expected to attend every class, and to have completed the readings and given themselves time to think about them in advance of each class.

Overview of Assignments:

All written submissions are to be submitted electronically as a MSWord attachment to the TA for the course, at the email address to be provided by the second week of classes. Your essays need to be double-spaced, typed in black ink, with one-inch margins, regular (12-point) font, number pages, and they are to include a title and the identifying information of the student, course, and instructor on the title page. They are to be properly documented using either APA, MLA, or Chicago style guidelines, and in keeping with these style guidelines, they must have precise page numbers for all references and quotations; must include the proper used of quotations for any phrases or sentences taken from any other source, and they must include a properly formatted bibliography.

Essays must follow the specific guidelines for them, answering or addressing the question assigned for it, and using the materials set out on the syllabus for the course (though students are most welcome to use additional readings as well, particularly scholarly publications, including peer-reviewed journals that are available through the library databases.

Essays that do not abide by the assigned guidelines will not be accepted.

Assignment 1: Elucidating and Applying Foucault and/or biopolitics

Maximum 2200 words, excluding bibliography

***Essays are to be submitted electronically, by email, as a MSWord attachment to Kristian Rafuse (Kristian.rafuse@dal.ca). To avoid any late penalties or miscommunications, you are required to have Kristian confirm that he has received your essay. *****

Additional instructions and essay guidelines are posted below (ie under the Essay 2 Instructions, and are also provided in the Syllabus file on BLS).
This course has been launched through a reading and application of Michel Foucault’s analytics of power and sex, and particularly through a consideration and application of his approach to genealogy and to biopolitics. In a carefully organized (structured and developed) essay, demonstrate your understanding of the significance of his approach to one of the topics covered in the History of Sexuality (or, if you like, Discipline and Punish), such as power, pleasure, science, truth, sex, punishment, or modern institutions.

In choosing the concept or topic from Foucault’s work, you are expected to use primary sources (i.e., his writing and/or public lectures, and specifically those listed on the syllabus for this course) rather than a secondary source or other author that summarizes them), although you are certainly welcome to supplement your work with such additional resources.

Whether you use additional resources that are not part of this course, you are required to draw on a wide variety (a minimum of 4) of the readings listed on the syllabus in developing your discussion. Consider this requirement to be one of the creative challenges of the assignment: relating Foucault to the work of other authors, or to other topics covered in the class that may or may not necessarily speak of him.

You are required to properly document your essays according to either APA, Chicago, or MLA guidelines (which are available on line and at the writing centre). This means, among other things, that all quotations and direct summaries from a text or article must include a properly formatted citation, with a precise page number) and proper corresponding bibliographic reference. Perhaps because it is among the most simple and clear formats, I recommend using the Chicago author/date system.

See below for additional essay objectives.

Assignment 2: Issues in Sexuality Studies/Gender and Political Theory

Maximum 2200 words, excluding bibliography

Choose a very specific topic, issue or question that is addressed in one or more of the readings for this course. You are asked to demonstrate your understanding of this issue (eg., a leading question or central debate on any topic of your choice, or a passing question flagged by one of the authors); clarify the debates around it and/or the analyses or critiques that have been or could be brought to the subject and/or clarify the differences between authors or disciplines or fields on it; and conclude with a consideration of the implications for contemporary political theory or public policy.

You are always encouraged to supplement the course resources with additional research materials or scholarly journals, etc., but you are expected to engage with the course materials, (a minimum of 4) and/or show your mastery of them in your discussion of the author or issue that you choose.
Papers that do not meet the guidelines will not be accepted.

Assignment Objectives

The general objectives of these assignments are as follows:

a) Concerning comprehension, breadth of the materials that you cover, and accuracy of content. One objective of these assignments is for you to demonstrate your understanding and thoughtful analysis of a wide selection of the readings that are listed on the syllabus for this course. It is also designed to assist you in developing and/or demonstrating the skills and practices of clearly and accurately representing, documenting, contextualizing, and contrasting the ideas and arguments of other writers on a given topic.

b) Concerning style: Another objective is for you to demonstrate your ability to develop and properly document a coherent argument in academic essay format, with attention to a clear introduction or outline; relevant paragraph development, and accurate referencing and citations.

c) Concerning method/approach. Another specific objective of this assignment is for you to demonstrate your understanding and appropriate application of the theoretical framework or context of your selected topic, author, or field in social and political thought.

Test Nov. 25

This test will be held in-class and will be comprised of up to 12 short-answer questions that will evaluate your understanding (and ability to apply) the work of the authors listed among required readings for this course and those discussed in class. It will cover the readings up to the end of October (i.e., two weeks beyond the date of the test, so you are asked to read ahead for two weeks to be able to integrate their arguments into your answers).

At the very outset of the course, you are encouraged to begin to review (and to begin taking notes on) all the materials covered as requirements for the course, both to ensure that your essays are informed by what is covered within them, and to prepare for the test, which will grant you an opportunity to demonstrate to summarize and apply them.

General policies concerning assignments and deadlines

The University Calendar makes plain that “[s]tudents are expected to complete class work by the prescribed deadlines. Only in special circumstances (e.g. the death of a close relative) may an instructor extend such deadlines.” In such circumstances, your instructor needs to be notified, and a request for an extension needs to be approved in advance of the deadline. Late assignments may be assessed a penalty of 3% per day.
Plagiarism (intentionally or unintentionally misrepresenting other people’s ideas as your own, or failing to provide proper quotations and page citations for any material that is taken from elsewhere) is a serious violation of academic ethics, and will be taken very seriously in this class. Information on what plagiarism is, how to avoid it, and the penalties for failing to do so, are available at: http://academicintegrity.dal.ca/. Plagiarized work will automatically be assigned an “F”.

Students are expected to carefully read the academic regulations in the University Calendar, and to make sure that they understand those which might pertain to them. In order to be fair to all students, all of the University’s regulations, and all of the course policies outlined above, will be strictly enforced.

Weekly Topics and Readings

1. Sept. 9
   Introductions and Overview

2. Sept. 16
   Michel Foucault: History and the Appearance of ‘Sexuality’
   Foucault on Power and Genealogical Inquiry

   • Michel Foucault, “The Gay Science” [197?]. Interview with Jean L. Bitoux. Translated by Nicolae Morar and Daniel W. Smith. Reprinted in Critical Inquiry 37 (Spring 2011) pp. 385-403.  (use your library access for this ejournal article)
   • Michel Foucault, Part II, “Scientia Sexualis,” History of Sexuality, pp. 17-49.

   Additional recommendations and suggested resource, especially for your papers:

   • Michel Foucault, Part III, “The Repressive Hypothesis,” History of Sexuality, pp. 53-73.

   • Michel Foucault. Discipline and Punish.
   • Michel Foucault, Society Must Be Defended.

3. Sept. 23
   Thinking with Foucault: Sex and Biopolitics
Sexual Regulation and the Politics of Life and Death


Additional resources:


- Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, “Biopower Today” Biosocieties (2006) pp. 195-217 (use your library access for this ejournal article)


4. Sept. 30
Western Feminism and Gender Analysis: Discourses of Identity, Difference and Oppression


**Additional references:**

- Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* is available as an electronic text through Project Gutenberg at: [http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/emile10.txt](http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext04/emile10.txt)
- John Stuart Mill, *The Subjection of Women* (1870), Chap. 1 (pp. 1-16) and Chapter 2 (pp. 53-91) This book is available in electronic format at Project Gutenberg at: [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/27083/27083-h/27083-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/27083/27083-h/27083-h.htm)

5. Oct. 7

**Sexual Politics and the Limits of Sexual Morality**

**The Turn to Sex in Feminist Debates**

Additional recommended resources:

- Rubin, G. “Blood Under the Bridge: Reflections on ‘Thinking Sex,’” *GLQ* 17: 1, pp. 15-48. ([use your library access for this ejournal article](#)).
- Catherine MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State*
- Catherine MacKinnon, “Sexuality” (essay)

6. Oct. 14 Thanksgiving

7. Oct. 21

   Sexual Morality, Law and Politics

   - Martha Nussbaum, Chapter 1, *From Disgust to Humanity*

Additional Resources:

- Martha Nussbaum on the Politics of Disgust: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWCe_b_8ZIm](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWCe_b_8ZIm)

8. Oct. 28

   Re-visiting and Re-Thinking Political Thought

Additional References:

- John Locke, *Second Treatise of Government* is available as an electronic text through Project Gutenberg at: [http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm](http://www.gutenberg.org/files/7370/7370-h/7370-h.htm)

9. **Nov. 4**

Queer Theory: Contesting the Normative


Additional Resources:


10. Nov. 11 Remembrance Day

11. Nov. 18

**Gilles Deleuze, New Materialism, and Sex**

• Tim Dean, “The Biopolitic of Pleasure,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 111: 3 (2012), 477-496. *(use your library access for this ejournal article)*

• Deleuze and Guatari, The Logic of Sense (selections).


12. Nov. 25

Test (Up to and including Nov. 18).

13. Dec. 2

**Queer Theory Now**

Panel of Presentations on the Contemporary Queer Theory