

WGSS 291: Scandal!: The Politics of the Sex Scandal

Fall 2018, UMass Amherst



Contact Me 	Meet with Me 	Class Location, Day, and Time 	Course Materials 
Elizabeth Williams ewilliams@umass.edu	Office Hours: Tu, Th: 1:00-3:00pm in South College W415 OR email me to make an appointment!	South College E241 Tu, Th: 11:30am-12:45pm	Look for course readings on our Moodle website .

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A Bit about the Course

Sex scandals have proven to be an enduring part of political discourse from the ancient times to the present. The first Roman Emperor, Augustus, exiled his daughter Julia after her philandering discredited his moral reforms; during the French Revolution, Marie Antoinette was accused of sleeping with men, women, and even her own son; and more recently, an unverified report from BuzzFeed involving Donald Trump and certain Moscow mattresses raised eyebrows and ire. Although sex scandals are often dismissed as lurid distractions from “real” political issues, in this course we will take them seriously as elements of political discourse. Through a close study of a number of political sex scandals, both past and present, students will consider the following questions: How and why are issues of sexuality morality tied to political legitimacy? Why is sex a useful discourse for expressing political discontent? How do issues of race, class, religion, and region influence the shape of sex scandals?

Students in this course will:

- Consider *how* and *why* sexual (mis)behavior functions as a metaphor for political legitimacy.
- Gain an understanding of how sexuality intersects with other forms of identity, including race, class, gender, religion, ability, nation, etc.
- Learn how to read academic texts strategically, looking for argument, evidence, and approach.
- Develop skills in academic research.

Who I am

I’m a visiting professor in the Department of Women, Gender, and Sexuality studies. I’m from North Carolina, but attended college at nearby Smith College, and moved to Minnesota for grad school. I completed my PhD in the field of history, but with a strong focus on issues of gender and sexuality. My own research focuses on race and sexuality in British colonial Kenya, and I’m currently working on a book manuscript. I am also extremely enthusiastic about cats, feminist crafting, and Beyoncé, not necessarily in that order.

What will help you to be Successful in this Course?

Disabilities

If you have a disability (documented or otherwise) I will make every effort to accommodate you. You can help me do this better if you alert me to your situation as soon as possible. Together, we can come up with a strategy that will allow you to access all the course materials.

If you are interested in finding out more about how to register your disability, you can consult the University's Disability Resource Center. You can find them at 161 Whitmore Administration building or at this website: www.umass.edu/disability.

Content Warnings

In this class, we will be talking (at length) about challenging issues like gender, race, and sexuality. If you are uncomfortable reading and discussing this material, this may not be the best class for you to take.

On the first day of class, I'll ask you to fill out a worksheet asking you to identify topics that you would like to receive warnings about ahead of time. Such warnings are intended to provide you with a heads-up so that you can take whatever precautions are necessary for self-care.

Help from me

This semester, I will be holding office hours Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1-3pm in my office, W415 South College. You are encouraged to drop in and see me. If my office hours don't work for me, you can also email me to make an appointment. Basic questions (involving the schedule, help accessing a reading, etc.) can be asked over email, but please give me at least 24 hours to respond.

Help from others

There are a number of resources around the university that can help you succeed in this course. These include:

- [The Writing Center](#)
- [The Learning Resource Center](#)
- [The English as a Second Language \(ESL\) Program](#)

UMass also has a new "[Single Stop Resources](#)" website that can help you navigate to a number of resources for assistance with academics, wellness, legal aid, etc.

Course Assignments

Grade Percentages

Attendance & Participation = 10%
Reading Quizzes: 15%
Anita Hill Analysis: 25%
Students' Choice Assignment: 25%
Final Research Project: 25%

Attendance and Participation

Showing up to class is the single best thing you can do to improve your grade. Your participation grade is based on 1) class attendance and 2) demonstration that you have done the reading and are actively engaging with the ideas discussed. One way to do this is to speak up in class; if you can answer my questions or if you have thought of your own questions to ask, I will know that you are keeping up. However, I understand that many people are uncomfortable speaking up in class. While I encourage you to try to speak up anyway, since this is a skill that you'll be called upon to use throughout your lives, if you know that you are a person who has difficulty participating vocally you can let me know. Together, we will come up with an alternative way for you to participate.

Reading Quizzes

Over the course of the semester, you will have ten opportunities to take a reading quiz. These are designed to ensure that you understood the major arguments of the readings. You are only required to take a total of five quizzes: however, you have the option to take additional quizzes to improve your grade. Quizzes that are not attempted will be recorded in the gradebook as a zero, but the lowest 5 scores will be dropped. After beginning the quiz, you will have ten minutes to finish. Quizzes must be completed by 11:00 am on Thursdays. On weeks when a major assignment is due, there will be no quiz.

Anita Hill Analysis

Students will compose a short written analysis of the Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas scandal. You will draw both from the film *Confirmation*, which will be

shown in class during Week 3, and from course readings. Full guidelines will be posted on the Moodle site. **Due Friday, Oct. 5 by 5pm.**

Students' Choice Assignment

Students will identify a **scholarly** article or chapter on a sex scandal that they feel should be discussed in class. You will write a short paper summarizing your chosen piece, and explaining how it expands our understanding of the role of sexuality/gender/race/class/etc. in politics. Three of your selections will be assigned to the class during Week 12. Full guidelines will be posted on the Moodle site. **Due Friday, November 9 by 5pm.**

Final Research Project

Students will complete a final research project which explores a sex scandal of their choice. Your project may be in the form of a PowerPoint presentation, a blog post, a photo essay, a video, a Wikipedia page, a digital timeline, or another format. Students will have the option to present their work to the class during Week 14. You will complete a project proposal (due Friday Oct. 12) outlining your proposed topic and explaining how you intend to present your work. Full guidelines will be posted on the Moodle site. The final project will be **due Friday, December 14 by 5pm.**

Absences

If you are absent from class because of illness or a family emergency, please let me know. I will excuse the absence provided you complete a short assignment summarizing the day's readings and listing several thoughtful questions or comments. If you are absent for other reasons (traffic, oversleeping, etc.) you will not be allowed to make up the day. Lateness counts against your attendance grade, so try to be on time.

Deadlines

Students who anticipate that they will need an extension on an assignment should speak to me as soon as possible. Extensions will be granted on a case-by-case basis. You are encouraged to turn in assignments even if they are late—a late assignment will always be worth more than a missed assignment. However, assignments received late will be marked down by a third of a grade letter for every day they are late (so an assignment that would have been an A will be an A- if turned in one day late, a B+ if turned in two days late, etc.).

Academic Dishonesty (is bad)

All students should be familiar with the University's policies governing student conduct and academic integrity. For a complete overview, see: <http://www.umass.edu/honesty/>

Plagiarism is totally unacceptable in my class, and I will fail any assignment that fails to cite an author whose words or ideas are invoked or that reproduces other people's work without quotation marks. We will talk more about what constitutes plagiarism in class. The best way to avoid plagiarism is to work on your assignments well ahead of time. Most students are tempted to copy other people's work in moments of panic directly before a due date. Don't put yourself in that position, and if the choice is between plagiarism and taking a late penalty, always take the penalty.

Week-by-Week Schedule

Week Number and Date	Reading for this session:	Quick reminders
Week 1: Introductions		
Sept 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Check out the Moodle site and look over the syllabus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">All course readings and documents can be found on the Moodle site.
Sept 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Kipnis, Laura. "Introduction" and "The Lovelorn Astronaut," in <i>How to Become a Scandal: Adventures in Bad Behavior</i>. First edition. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010.	
Week 2: Misbehaving Monarchs		
Sept 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Clark, Anna. "Queen Caroline and the Sexual Politics of the British Constitution," <i>Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution</i>. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2004.	

Week Number and Date	Reading for this session:	Quick reminders
Sept 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hunt, Lynn Avery. "The Bad Mother," in <i>The Family Romance of the French Revolution</i>. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Quiz by 11am.
Week 3: Anita Hill/Clarence Thomas		
Sept 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Selections from Morrison, Toni, ed. <i>Race-Ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality</i>. 1st edition. New York: Pantheon, 1992. In class film: <i>Confirmation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make sure you take notes on the film—these will come in handy for your first assignment.
Sept 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In class film: Finish <i>Confirmation</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Quiz by 11am.
Week 4: Sex and Space		
Sept 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Houlbrook, Matt. "Part 2: Places" <i>Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957</i>. The Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005: 43-138. 	
Sept 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mendes, Kaitlynn. Selections from <i>SlutWalk: Feminism, Activism and Media</i>. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015. "An Open Letter from Black Women to the Slutwalk." <i>Gender & Society</i> 30, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 9-13. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Quiz by 11am.
Week 5: #metoo		
Oct 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> News coverage assignment: see moodle for details Guest Speaker: Jackson Katz 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jackson Katz talk tonight 5:30-7:00pm in the Old Chapel

Week Number and Date	Reading for this session:	Quick reminders
Oct 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Greenberg, Zoe. "What Happens to #MeToo When a Feminist Is the Accused?" <i>The New York Times</i>, August 13, 2018. Letter of support from Judith Butler, et al. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No quiz this week. Anita Hill Assignment due Oct. 5 by 5pm.
Week 6: The Lavendar Menace		
Oct 9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No class—Monday schedule 	
Oct 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Terry, Jennifer, "Fear of a World Conspiracy," in <i>An American Obsession: Science, Medicine, and Homosexuality in Modern Society</i>. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1999: 329-352. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Quiz by 11am. Project Proposal due Friday, Oct. 12 by 5pm.
Week 7: Monica and Bill		
Oct. 16	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sasha Torres, "On Graphic Language and the Modesty of Television News," in Berlant, Lauren, and Lisa A. Duggan, eds. <i>Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest</i>. New York: New York University Press, 2001: 268-184. Fruhlinger, Josh. "Everything We Learned About Blow Jobs We Learned From Monica Lewinsky and Bill Clinton." <i>MEL Magazine</i>, January 12, 2017. 	
Oct. 18	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> McElya, Micki, "Trashing the Presidency: Race, Class, and the Clinton/Lewinsky Affair," in Berlant, Lauren, and Lisa A. Duggan, eds. <i>Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest</i>. New York: New York University Press, 2001: 156-174. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Quiz by 11am.

Week Number and Date	Reading for this session:	Quick reminders
Week 8: Slavery		
Oct 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rothman, Joshua. "Hardy Sallygate: Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Sex Scandal that Wasn't," in Apostolidis, Paul, and Juliet Williams. <i>Public Affairs: Politics in the Age of Sex Scandals</i>. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004: 101-136. 	
Oct 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Augustín, Laura. "The Soft Side of Imperialism." <i>Counterpunch</i>, January 25, 2012. Augustín, Laura. "Migrants in the Mistress's House: Other Voices in the 'Trafficking' Debate." <i>Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society</i> 12, no. 1 (2005): 96–117. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Quiz by 11am.
Week 9: Sexual Knowledge		
Oct 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bland, Lucy. "Trial by Sexology?: Maud Allan, Salome and the 'Cult of the Clitoris' Case." In <i>Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires</i>, edited by Lucy Bland and Laura L. Doan, 183–98. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998. 	
Nov 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brown, Kathleen. "'Changed... into the Fashion of Man': The Politics of Sexual Difference in a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Settlement." <i>Journal of the History of Sexuality</i> 6, no. 2 (October 1, 1995): 171–93. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Quiz by 11am.
Week 10: Age		
Nov 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Zaborskis, Mary. "Age Drag." <i>WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly</i> 43, no. 1 (May 13, 2015): 115–29. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Election Day—GO VOTE!!!

Week Number and Date	Reading for this session:	Quick reminders
Nov 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No readings Bring draft of Students' choice for in-class Peer Review exercise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No quiz this week. Students' Choice assignment due Nov. 9 by 5pm.
Week 11: Pornography		
Nov 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dworkin, Andrea, "Against the Male Flood: Censorship, Pornography, and Equality," in Cornell, Drucilla, ed. <i>Feminism and Pornography</i>. Oxford Readings in Feminism. Oxford, UK ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. Fischer, Anne Gray "Forty Years in the Hustle: A Q&A with Margo St. James." <i>Bitch Media</i> (2013). https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/forty-years-in-the-hustle-sex-work-margo-st-james-interview-activism-coyote 	
Nov 15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moore, Kevin. "Whipping up a Storm: How Robert Mapplethorpe Shocked America." <i>The Guardian</i>, November 17, 2015. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Quiz by 11am. Fall Break: Nov. 17-25
Week 12: Students' Choice		
Nov 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBA 	
Nov 29	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> TBA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Quiz by 11am.
Week 13: Religion		
Dec 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fetner, Tina. "Where's the Party? Entering the Republican and Democratic Folds," in <i>How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism</i>. Social Movements, Protest, and Contention, v. 	

Week Number and Date	Reading for this session:	Quick reminders
	<p>31. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Avery, Dan. "19 Republican Politicians Brought Down By Big Gay Sex Scandals" <i>Logotv.Com</i>, December 30, 2016. http://www.newnownext.com/19-republican-politicians-brought-down-by-big-gay-sex-scandals/12/2016/ 	
Dec 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lal, Vinay. "Nakedness, Nonviolence, and Brahmacharya: Gandhi's Experiments in Celibate Sexuality." <i>Journal of the History of Sexuality</i> 9, no. 1/2 (January 1, 2000): 105–36. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Finish Quiz by 11am.
Week 14: Trump		
Dec 10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading TBA ... let's see what happens ... 	
Dec 12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No readings. In Class: Student Presentations 	Final Project due Dec. 14 by 5pm.