286: History of Sexuality and Race in the United States

Location: Thompson Hall 102

Time: Tuesday 8:30-9:45am

Professor:

Angie Willey

E-mail: awilley@umass.edu

Office Hours: 11am-12pm Tuesday and by appointment

Office: South College rm. W401 or Zoom

Discussion Section Instructors:

Nicole le Roux (Sections 01AB & 01AC)

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Office hours: Tuesdays 12 pm -1 pm by Zoom & in person by appointment. Use this link to join zoom office hours: https://umass-amherst.zoom.us/j/8567293650

Office: W406 S. College or Zoom

Section 01AB: Fridays 10:10 - 11:00 in Elm 224

Section 01AC: Fridays 11:15-12:05 in Elm 224

Tiarra Cooper (Sections 01AD & 01AE)

Email: tacooper@umass.edu

Office hours: Fridays 10:00-11:00 and by appointment

Office: W406 S. College

Section 01AD: Fridays 11:15-12:05 in Bartlett Hall room 3
Section 01AD: Fridays 12:20-1:10 in Bartlett Hall room 3

Overview

This course is an introduction to the interdisciplinary feminist study of sexuality and race. Its primary goal is to provide a forum for students to consider histories of the concepts of sexuality and race in the U.S. We will explore these concepts through theoretical frameworks within WGSS and in terms of a range of sites where those theoretical approaches become material, are negotiated, or are shifted. The course is a fully interdisciplinary innovation. It will emphasize the links rather than differences between theory and practice and between cultural, material, and historical approaches to bodies, race, gender, and sexuality. Throughout the course, we will consider contemporary U.S. politics in light of histories of racial and sexual formations.

Course Objectives

To provide a critical introduction to the concepts of sexuality and race in the U.S.

To provide an introduction to the historical interconnectedness of formations of race and sexuality in the U.S.

To emphasize the role of sexuality and race in the formation of the modern self and its social, legal, political, and cultural frames of reference

To insist on the necessary relationship between theory and lived experiences of bodies

To introduce students to a range of historical and interdisciplinary materials and approaches.

Course Outcomes

An understanding of historical contingency with respect to sexuality and race.

Ability to apply feminist theoretical perspectives on sexuality and race to analyses of particular case studies.

Gen-Ed Goals for this Course

The objectives and outcomes for this class are designed to meet general education goals.

This course has a U Gen Ed designation, meeting the general education curriculum goal of creating awareness of the various dimensions of human identity, including issues of race and ethnicity, social class, gender, age, sexual identity, disability and nationality.
This course also has an HS Social World Gen Ed designation, for historical studies, meeting the general education goal of learning how our histories and the stories we tell about them shape the present.

**Required Readings**

There are no texts to purchase for this class. All of the readings are available either through UMass Library Course Materials on Moodle or as ebooks through the UMass library catalog.

This course entails a significant amount of reading. Please make sure to budget enough time to complete the readings and take notes prior to class. It is essential that you complete the readings before class begins in order to participate fully in the intellectual life of the course. Readings listed for a specific date are meant to be completed before class on the that date. Readings for every week are on that section of Moodle.

- **Class Policies** (see Moodle)
  
  Here you will find policies on everything from electronics to Title IX

- **Course Requirements and Evaluation Criteria** (see below & on Moodle)
  
  Here you will find information on assignments. Upcoming assignment deadlines will be in red on your schedule below.

- **Tips for Studying and Improving Concentration** (see Moodle)

**Course Requirements and Evaluation Criteria**

**Participation (20%)** – You are expected to regularly attend all lectures and your assigned discussion section. In addition to attending lectures and sections, you are expected to have completed the readings and to participate in discussions; in your first section meetings, you will collectively discuss what constitutes “good” section participation. In lecture, good participation includes active listening and notetaking and engaging in individual and group in-class exercises. In section, good participation includes asking questions, promoting dialogue, listening carefully to other students, making comments that are built off other students’ comments and questions, making space for students who have not yet talked, and bringing comments back to course texts and lecture material. If you are unsure how to participate effectively, please talk to your TA. If you must miss a lecture or discussion section, you are expected to participate on the absentee forum* for the week. Because lectures are only once weekly, missing more than one class is a problem. Communicate early
about any COVID or non-COVID related emergencies, so that we can make arrangements so you can stay in good standing in the class.

**Short Papers** (30%, 3 @ 10% ea.) – Three times throughout the semester (dates marked on Moodle in Red) you will submit a 2-3 page double-spaced paper that discusses topics covered in the period since the last short paper. Please use the prompt provided. These papers are meant to provide an opportunity for you to take stock of what you have learned, to practice putting key insights into your own words, and to raise questions for future discussion. In this sense, they are informal. You can indicate what surprised you, what angered or confused you, and what interested you the most. In writing these papers, you are expected to make specific references to class readings, lectures, and guest speakers. You will be graded not on writing per se (as these are informal papers), but rather on depth of engagement with the material and willingness to grapple meaningfully with the ideas. Deadlines are firm. You may request a 48hr extension in advance of a deadline. Instructors grade papers as a set and the syllabus is designed to have a certain work rhythm. Your lateness impacts your peers and instructors and you will continue to fall behind if you miss deadlines, so please plan ahead.

**Quizzes** (20%, 4 @ 5% ea.) – Over the course of the term, we will have five in-class quizzes; your lowest quiz grade will be dropped. Quizzes will not be announced ahead of time; however, they will be open-note (typed or hand-written hard-copies only) and based on the readings and lectures for that week of the class. If you attend class and complete the readings, the quizzes will not be difficult. Hint: Use the framing questions to guide your note-taking! Please note: you will NOT be able to access electronic devices during quizzes and make-up quizzes will not be offered. If you miss a quiz, that’s the grade we will drop. If you miss two quizzes, then you have missed at least two (once-weekly) lectures, so you need to be in dialogue with your prof and discussion section instructor to make arrangements. Again, communication is everything- reach out asap!

**Narratives Mini-Presentation** (10%) – This assignment is designed to deepen students’ understandings of the embodied nature of histories of sexuality and race in the U.S. and the ways in which lives exceed inherited histories. For this assignment, you will prepare a single slide and deliver a one-minute mini-presentation on a work of fiction or narrative non-fiction and connect it to the themes of the class (your reading choice must be approved in advance by your section instructor, no exceptions).

**Take-Home Final Exam** (20%) – Your take home exam will be a mix of short-answer and essay questions. It will be distributed the last week of class and due the following week.
Course Schedule

Week 1: January 25

Welcome to History of Sexuality and Race in the US!

Meet your teaching team

Course Background & Overview

Syllabus Overview

Introductory paragraph due Friday 1/28 before your first discussion section meeting.
See prompt and assignment link below!

Introductory Paragraph (due Thursday Jan 27 by noon) Assignment

Please tell us who you are, about your background in thinking about race and sexuality and why you want to learn more, as well as a bit about your strengths as a student and areas you are working on improving (for example, perhaps you’re great at or working on getting better at clear writing, organization, time-management, reading carefully, asking pertinent questions, speaking up in class, making connections between academic texts and the world beyond the class, etc)

Week 2: February 1

Manifesting Change

For this week we will read and discuss several short manifestos* that address the course's key themes

Questions: What problems have the collectives and individuals who authored these statements diagnosed? What change do they want to see? What do these manifestos teach us about race and sexuality?

**"A manifesto is a published declaration of the intentions, motives, or views of the issuer, be it an individual, group, political party or government. A manifesto
usually accepts a previously published opinion or public consensus or promotes a new idea with prescriptive notions for carrying out changes the author believes should be made. It often is political or artistic in nature.” (Wikipedia)

Readings:

The Combahee River Collective Statement:


Queer of Color Manifesto:

http://www.columbia.edu/cu/qoc/qoc.html

Black Lives Matter:

https://blacklivesmatter.com/herstory/

Femme Shark Manifesto:

http://queerfatfemme.com/femme-sharks/femme-shark-manifesto/

An Intersex Manifesto:

https://mishmich.wordpress.com/2012/05/31/an-intersex-manifesto/

The Transfeminist Manifesto:


Against Equality (on marriage, military, and prison):

http://www.againstequality.org/about/marriage/

http://www.againstequality.org/about/military/

http://www.againstequality.org/about/prison/

Undocuqueer Manifesto (2nd video down):

https://equalityarchive.com/issues/undocuqueer-movement/
Queers Crash the Beat Statement:

http://queerscrashthebeat.com

Lamonda Horton Stallings, "Dirt Manifesto"
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1V-TsE7Bsc1IrMDaxBzU0kwNMQBTkTDUn/view?usp=sharing

Week 3: February 8

On the Whitewashing of Queer History

Questions: What competing stories of queer history does Ferguson talk about? What does he mean by “one dimensional” vs “multidimensional”? And by “the historical assumptions of multidimensional queer politics”?

Readings:


- Introduction, 1-17
- Chapter 1. The Multidimensional Beginnings of Gay Liberation, 18-45
- Conclusion: The Historical Assumptions of Multidimensional Queer Politics, 143-151

Week 4: February 15

Historicizing Key Concepts: Race & Sexuality as Knowledge Systems

Questions:

What does it mean to look at race as a social and historical category? Where did the concept come from?

What does it mean to look at sexuality as a social and historical category, rather than simply an attribute of bodies? How did Foucauldian perspectives change sexuality studies? Rather than looking for queer folks in the past, what should we be asking about sexuality and history?

Readings:
Audrey Smedley and Brian D. Smedley, Race in North America: Origin and Evolution of a Worldview, Fourth Edition (Westview Press, 2011), 11-40. (Ch. 1 and Ch. 2, be sure to read both pdfs!)


**Short Paper #1:** Based on your reading so far, why do we need scholarship, activism, and writing on the history of race and sexuality in the U.S.? Please refer to Smedley, Padgug, and at least 3 manifestos

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**Week 6: March 1**

[PLEASE NOTE: Week 5, Feb 22nd is a Monday schedule. Pls use this time to begin readings and watching / listening to lectures for the next 2 weeks.]

Colonialism, Settler Sexuality, and Belonging

**Questions:** How is queer being used here? How did the disciplining of indigenous kinship work to produce heterosexuality?

**Readings:**


Listen: Kim Tallbear podcast interview on "Moving Beyond Settler Sexualities"

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**Week 7: March 8**

Legacies of Slavery

**Questions:** What does Spillers raise about what we still have to learn from the 18th century? How are contemporary sexual stereotypes produced through histories of slavery (Roberts)?

**Readings:**

**Lecture:**

**Short Paper #2: How have histories of settler colonialism (Rifkin, Tallbear) and slavery (Spillers, Roberts) shaped sexuality? Based on these readings, how would you explain to a friend the importance of histories of racism and nationalism to understanding sexuality?**

**Week 8: March 22**

*[Pls note, March 15 is during spring break, so no classes]*

Racial/Sexual Science: Reproduction, Difference, and American Eugenics

**Guest Lecture: Jennifer Hamilton**

**Questions:** What is the philosophy of eugenics? How is sexuality at the heart of eugenic movements (give examples)? What does McWhorter mean by "Saving the Eugenic Baby and Throwing Out the Nazi Bathwater?" How did American Eugenics continue to thrive after 1950?


**Week 9: March 29**

Eugenics, cont / Details TBA

**Short Paper #3: On Eugenics, eugenic discourse, and the differential valuation of lives (Prompt TBA)**

**Week 10: April 5**

Storytelling: Critiques of Descriptive Research and an Overemphasis on Pain

Nicci le Roux
Questions:

What do you think Keguro Macharia is saying when he retells the Scorpion and Frog story? What have you noticed about how he tells stories and what do you think his purpose is in telling stories in this way? What do you think Katherine McKittrick means when she writes that stories have "no answers" or are not about "knowing totally"?

Readings:


Week 11: April 12

To Be Announced

Weeks 12-13: April 19 & 26

Narratives Mini-Presentations: Livingness and Resistance

Book sign-ups will happen early in the semester and assignment guidelines will be reviewed in class!

Week 14: May 3

Manifestos Revisited

In-class group exercise

Final Exam Q&A