

WGSS 191S: The Politics of the Sex Scandal Fall 2017

Prof. Elizabeth Williams
MWF 11:15-12:05pm
Hasbrouck Laboratory Room 228

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Office Hours: MW 1-3pm; T 10am-12pm
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Course Description: 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.

Course Readings

All class readings can be found on the course moodle site:
<https://moodle.umass.edu/course/view.php?id=39306>

Course readings appear on the syllabus under the day on which they will be discussed. Therefore, if a reading is listed under the heading “Sep 9,” students must complete that reading by class time on September 9.

Assignments:

Attendance & Participation = 10%
Reading Quizzes: 15%
Play Assignment: 25%
Students’ Choice Assignment: 25%
Final Multimedia Presentation: 25%

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: Students will complete five quizzes on the readings over the course of the semester. After beginning the quiz, you will have ten minutes to finish. A total of ten quizzes will be available: students may take more quizzes if they wish to raise their grade. Quizzes that are not attempted will be recorded in the gradebook as a zero, but the lowest 5 scores will be dropped. Quizzes must be completed by 10:30am on Fridays.

Play Assignment: Due Friday, Sept. 29 by 5pm. Students will attend a showing of play *The Scarlet Professor*, which will be held September 15 & 16, 2017 at 8pm and September 17, 2017 at 3pm at Theatre 14, Mendenhall Center for the Arts, Smith College, Northampton, MA. (You can find the website for the play [here](#).) They will then complete a short reflection paper (3-5 pages, double-spaced) connecting the play to larger course themes. Full guidelines for the assignment will be posted on Moodle. There will also be a symposium held Saturday, Sept. 16. Students will have the opportunity to complete an extra credit assignment by attending the panel on “Sex and Shame from the Puritans to the Present” from 3-4:45pm in the Earle Recital Hall, Sage Hall at Smith College. (Website for symposium [here](#).)

Students’ Choice Assignment: Due Friday, Nov. 3 by 5pm. 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.

Final Multimedia Project/Presentation: Due in class, Monday, Dec. 11. 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. Please also upload your project to moodle. You will complete a project proposal (due Friday Oct. 13 in class) outlining your proposed topic and explaining how you intend to present your work. Full guidelines will be posted on the moodle site.

Late Assignments Policy: 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. 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.). However, students should still make every effort to turn in assignments—a late assignment will always be worth more than a missed assignment.

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.

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. You can also consult the University's Disability Resource Center: see <https://www.umass.edu/disability/>

Content Warnings: In this class, we will be talking (at length) about sex and sexuality, race and racism, and other challenging topics. 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, students will be asked to fill out a worksheet asking them to identify topics that they would like to receive warnings about ahead of time. Such warnings are intended to provide students with a heads-up so that they can take whatever precautions are necessary for self-care.

Schedule:

Week 1: Introductions

Sep 6: Introductions; Syllabus

Sep 8: Kipnis, Laura. "Introduction" and "The Lovelorn Astronaut," in *How to Become a Scandal: Adventures in Bad Behavior*. First edition. New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010.

Week 2: Sex at Work

Sep 11:

Selections from Morrison, Toni, ed. *Race-Ing Justice, En-Gendering Power: Essays on Anita Hill, Clarence Thomas, and the Construction of Social Reality*. 1st edition. New York: Pantheon, 1992.

Sep 13: Guest Speakers: Harley Erdman and Eric Sawyer discuss *The Scarlet Professor*

Sep 15:

Laura Kipnis, "[Sexual Paranoia Strikes Academe](#)," *The Chronicle of Higher Education Review*, Feb. 27, 2015.

Cooke, Rachel. "[Sexual Paranoia on Campus – and the Professor at the Eye of the Storm](#)." *The Observer*, April 2, 2017.

[Wellesley Statement](#) from CERE faculty re: Laura Kipnis Freedom Project visit and aftermath

Attend a production of [The Scarlet Professor](#), Sept.15 & 16, 2017 at 8pm or September 17, 2017 at 3pm

EXTRA CREDIT: Attend [panel](#) on Sept. 16 "Sex and Shame from the Puritans to the Present" from 3-4:45pm.

Week 3: Misbehaving Monarchs

Sep 18:

Clark, Anna. "Queen Caroline and the Sexual Politics of the British Constitution," *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Sep 20:

Hunt, Lynn Avery. "The Bad Mother," in *The Family Romance of the French Revolution*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992.

Sep 22:

Steakley, James. "Sodomy in Enlightenment Prussia:" *Journal of Homosexuality* 16, no. 1–2 (January 10, 1989): 163–75.

Play Assignment Due

Week 4: Sex and Space

Sep 25:

Houlbrook, Matt. "Part 2: Places" *Queer London: Perils and Pleasures in the Sexual Metropolis, 1918-1957*. The Chicago Series on Sexuality, History, and Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005: 43-138.

Sep 27:

Mendes, Kaitlynn. Selections from *SlutWalk: Feminism, Activism and Media*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

"An Open Letter from Black Women to the Slutwalk." *Gender & Society* 30, no. 1 (February 1, 2016): 9–13.

Sep 29: Guest Speaker: Prof. Jack Giesecking

Osgerby, Bill. 2005. "The Bachelor Pad as Cultural Icon: Masculinity, Consumption and Interior Design in American Men's Magazines, 1930-65." *Journal of Design History* 18 (1): 99–113.

Friedman, Alice T. 2007. "People Who Live in Glass Houses: Edith Farnsworth, Ludwig Mies van Der Rohe, and Phillip Johnson." In *Women and the Making of the Modern House*, 1st ed., 128–59. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Week 5: Monica and Bill

Oct 2:

Zaretsky, Eli. "The Culture Wars of the 1960s and the Assault on the Presidency: The Meaning of the Clinton Impeachment," in Berlant, Lauren, and Lisa A. Duggan, eds. *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest*. New York: New York University Press, 2001: 9-33.

Oct 4:

Sasha Torres, "On Graphic Language and the Modesty of Television News," in Berlant, Lauren, and Lisa A. Duggan, eds. *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest*. 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](https://melmagazine.com/everything-we-learned-about-blow-jobs-we-learned-from-monica-lewinsky-and-bill-clinton-8d8414f5b58a)." *MEL Magazine*, January 12, 2017.

<https://melmagazine.com/everything-we-learned-about-blow-jobs-we-learned-from-monica-lewinsky-and-bill-clinton-8d8414f5b58a>

Oct 6:

McElya, Micki, "Trashing the Presidency: Race, Class, and the Clinton/Lewinsky Affair," in in Berlant, Lauren, and Lisa A. Duggan, eds. *Our Monica, Ourselves: The Clinton Affair and the National Interest*. New York: New York University Press, 2001: 156-174.

Week 6: Slavery

TUESDAY Oct 10:

Rothman, Joshua. "Hardy Sallygate: Thomas Jefferson, Sally Hemings, and the Sex Scandal that Wasn't," in Apostolidis, Paul, and Juliet Williams. *Public Affairs: Politics in the Age of Sex Scandals*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2004: 101-136.

Oct 11:

Foster, Thomas A. "The Sexual Abuse of Black Men under American Slavery." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 20, no. 3 (September 1, 2011): 445–64.

Oct. 13:

Augustín, Laura. ["The Soft Side of Imperialism."](#) *Counterpunch*, January 25, 2012.

Augustín, Laura. "Migrants in the Mistress's House: Other Voices in the 'Trafficking' Debate." *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State and Society* 12, no. 1 (2005): 96–117.

Project Proposal Due in Class

Week 7: Sexual Knowledge

Oct 16:

Bland, Lucy. "Trial by Sexology?: Maud Allan, Salome and the 'Cult of the Clitoris' Case." In *Sexology in Culture: Labelling Bodies and Desires*, edited by Lucy Bland and Laura L. Doan, 183–98. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998.

Oct 18:

Brown, Kathleen. "'Changed... into the Fashion of Man': The Politics of Sexual Difference in a Seventeenth-Century Anglo-American Settlement." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6, no. 2 (October 1, 1995): 171–93.

Oct 20:

Horowitz, Helen Lefkowitz. "Victoria Woodhull, Anthony Comstock, and Conflict over Sex in the United States in the 1870s." *The Journal of American History* 87, no. 2 (September 1, 2000): 403–34.

Week 8: Age

Oct 23:

Rubin, Gayle. "Thinking Sex," in *Pleasure and danger : exploring female sexuality*, ed. Carole S Vance. Boston : Routledge & K. Paul 1984.

Thakor, Mitali. "Problematising the Dominant Discourse around Children, Youth and the Internet." *Global Information Society Watch 2015: Sexual Rights and the Internet*, 2015, 30–34.

Oct 25:

Zaborskis, Mary. "Age Drag." *WSQ: Women's Studies Quarterly* 43, no. 1 (May 13, 2015): 115–29.

Oct 27:

Sarkar, Tanika. "A Prehistory of Rights: The Age of Consent Debate in Colonial Bengal." *Feminist Studies* 26, no. 3 (2000): 601–622.

Week 9: Imperialism I

Oct 30:

Sigal, Pete. "The Politicization of Pederasty among the Colonial Yucatecan Maya." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 8, no. 1 (July 1997): 1–24.

Nov 1:

Pedersen, Susan. "National Bodies, Unspeakable Acts: The Sexual Politics of Colonial Policy-making," *The Journal of Modern History* 63, no. 4 (1991): 647–680.

Nov 3:

Arondekar, Anjali. "Archival Attachments: The Story of an India-Rubber Dildo," in *For the Record : On Sexuality and the Colonial Archive in India*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2009: 97-130.

Students' Choice Assignment Due

Week 10: Imperialism II

Nov 6:

Epprecht, Marc. "Gay Shaka," in *Heterosexual Africa? The History of an Idea from the Age of Exploration to the Age of AIDS*. New African Histories Series. Athens: Ohio University Press, 2008.

Nov 8:

Clark, Anna. "Edmund Burke and the Begums of Oudh: Gender, Empire, and Public Opinion," *Scandal: The Sexual Politics of the British Constitution*. Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2004.

Nov 10:

Ronald Hyam, "Empire and Sexual Opportunity," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 14 , No. 2 (1986): 39-90.

SHORT PAPER TWO DUE

Week 11: Religion

Nov 13:

Fetner, Tina. "Where's the Party? Entering the Republican and Democratic Folds," in *How the Religious Right Shaped Lesbian and Gay Activism*. Social Movements, Protest, and Contention, v. 31. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008.

Avery, Dan. "[19 Republican Politicians Brought Down By Big Gay Sex Scandals](http://www.newnownext.com/19-republican-politicians-brought-down-by-big-gay-sex-scandals/12/2016/)," *Logotv.Com*, December 30, 2016. <http://www.newnownext.com/19-republican-politicians-brought-down-by-big-gay-sex-scandals/12/2016/>

Nov 15:

Lal, Vinay. "Nakedness, Nonviolence, and Brahmacharya: Gandhi's Experiments in Celibate Sexuality." *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 9, no. 1/2 (January 1, 2000): 105-36.

Nov 17:

Selections from Fox, Richard Wightman. *Trials of Intimacy: Love and Loss in the Beecher-Tilton Scandal*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1999.

NO CLASS FOR TURKEY REASONS: Nov 20-24

Week 12: Students' Choice!

Nov 27

Nov 29

Dec 1

Week 13: Pornography

Dec 4:

Dworkin, Andrea, "Against the Male Flood: Censorship, Pornography, and Equality," in Cornell, Drucilla, ed. *Feminism and Pornography*. 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.](https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/forty-years-in-the-hustle-sex-work-margo-st-james-interview-activism-coyote)" *Bitch Media* (2013). <https://www.bitchmedia.org/article/forty-years-in-the-hustle-sex-work-margo-st-james-interview-activism-coyote>

Dec 6:

Reid-Pharr, Robert. "Putting Mapplethorpe in His Place," *Art in America*, no. 3 (2016): 100-109.

Dec 8:

Hester, Jessica. "[Feast of Burden: The Transgressive, Disturbing World of 'Feeding' Porn.](#)" *Bitch Magazine*, August 17, 2009 **AND** selected comments

Week 14: Wrap-Up

Dec 11:

Final Project Presentations