FOLKLORE AND SEXUALITY/Folklore 270
Spring 2009

David Azzolina
w- 215-898-5322, 7556
h- 215-222-8249 (before 10 pm)
azzolina@pobox.upenn.edu
office: Van Pelt Library, Room 208
AIM: azzolina19104

Sexuality is usually thought of as being biological or social, divided into categories of natural and unnatural. Often missed are its creative and communicative aspects. Examining the constructed social elements of sexuality requires attention be paid to folklore in groups, between individuals and on the larger platform of popular technological media. The most interesting locations for exploration are those places where borderlands or margins, occur between genders, orientations and other cultural categories.

A field-based paper will be required that must include documentary research. The references in the bibliography and readings can serve as the basis of the documentation. The paper will be divided into three parts: 1) introduction and published materials 2) description of fieldwork 3) a reflection on what was learned and experienced from the process. Surveys are not allowed for the fieldwork portion. Brief presentations (five minutes or so) by each student on their topics may be required toward the end of the semester, if time allows.

Provisional grades on the papers will be given as the first two sections are handed in.
Class attendance is mandatory and will be taken into account in the final grade.

There are two or three quizzes as well as two fieldwork exercises.

Grade breakdown: Paper: 50% Quizzes/Fieldwork papers: 25% Class attendance and participation: 25%

WARNING: Some class discussions involve subjects that are very sensitive to many people—matters that are often labeled “explicit.” No one is obligated to participate and permission is readily granted to those choosing not to attend if they feel uncomfortable. In fact, I am often uncomfortable myself and will say so. But I have no intention of trying to control discussions to conform to my values, though I reserve the right to make a few exceptions.

SECOND WARNING: I recognize that there is a lot of reading in this class. It will not all be discussed in class, though I expect the material to be read and thought about, since the quizzes are about the readings. Complaints about the quantity should be mitigated by the fact that they are (mostly) fairly easy. The other piece of bad news here is I may also assign additional reading as the semester progresses.
Books will be available at the Penn Book Center (130 South 34th—at Sansom St.) and also on reserve at Van Pelt Rosengarten.


Readings marked with an asterisk (*) will be part of the course Blackboard site.

**January 15/20**—Introduction of terms: sex, sexuality, gender, folklore


*Noyes, Dorothy. “Folklore” in Social Science Encyclopedia, ed. by Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper.


Weeks, Jeffrey. *Sexuality.*

**January 22/27**—Sexuality in classic folklore texts: Decameron, 1001 nights

Bible: to be read aloud in class.

3

*Arabian Nights: "The Jewish Physician's Tale"

January 29/February 3-Sexual Folklore in Dyads

*Bendix, Regina. "Marmot, Memet and Maroset."

A list of memoirs or diaries of relationships will be handed out in advance. Each student will be expected to talk about the material they read in light of the Bendix article.

February 5/10-The Body Sexual/ Field Work

Polhemus, Ted. Customized Body.


http://links.jstor.org/sici?sici=0021-8715%2819942%29107%3A423%3C181%3ATFOL%3E2.0.CO%3B2-E

http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:8226/FSIP?sici=0308-275X%2820020301%29222%3A1%3C7%3AIOTRT%3E&dbname=ECO_FT

recommended:

February 12-The Body Sexual, part 2

part one of paper due on February 12

February 17/19- Representations of Femininity/Masculinity


Fieldwork assignment: notice gender differences in how people greet one another in public. Men/Women, Women/Women, Men/Men. Pay attention to age, race, and context. Bring material representations or suggestions for web sites to look at.

**February 24/26—Folklore and Sexual Minorities**

Brown, Richardo J. The Evening Crowd at Kirmser's: A Gay Life in the 1940s.

**March 3/5—Folklore and Sexual Minorities, part 2**

Feinberg, Leslie. Transgendered Warriors.

**March 10/12—Spring Break**

**March 17/10—Film: Paris is Burning**

**March 24/26—Sexuality and belief systems**

Film: the Polygamists

Ingraham, Chrys. White Weddings.


**March 31/April 2—Material Culture and Technology/ Guest speaker—**

April 7/9--Sexual Humor/Urban Legends

part two of paper due April 10


Fieldwork assignment: either 1) collect four jokes that have sexual content from friends, family, etc. or 2) if possible observe two jokes being told. In both cases, pay attention to body language. In the second case, include details about the context and how the joke was introduced and how the audience responded.

April 14/16--AIDS

Goldstein, Diane. Once upon a Virus:AIDS Legends and Vernacular Risk Perception.


April 21/23--Sexuality and Ethnicity

*Adams and Kimmel, “Exploring the lives of older African American Gay Men”
*Williams, South Italian Folkways in America, pp. 73-106;
*Messenger, "Sex and Repression in an Irish Folk Community"

April 28—Course recap

completed paper due May 1