

FOLKLORE AND SEXUALITY/Folklore 270

Spring 2009

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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.

- Brown, Richardo J. The Evening Crowd at Kirmser's: A Gay Life in the 1940s.
Minneapolis : University of Minnesota Press, 2001
- Feinberg, Leslie. Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to RuPaul.
Boston : Beacon Press, 1996.
- Goldstein, Diane. Once upon a Virus: AIDS Legends and Vernacular Risk Perception.
Logan : Utah State University Press, 2004.
- Guerrilla Girls. Bitches, Bimbos, and Ballbreakers: The Guerrilla Girls Illustrated History of Females. New York: Penguin, 2003.
- Ingraham, Chrys. White Weddings. New York: Routledge, 1999.
- Pascoe, C.J. Dude You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School. Berkeley:
University of California Press, 2007.
- Plummer, Ken. Telling Sexual Stories. New York: Routledge, 1994.
- Polhemus, Ted. Customized Body. London : Serpent's Tail Limited, 2000
- Weeks, Jeffrey. Sexuality. 2nd edition. New York: Routledge, 2003

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

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

- *Braun, Virginia and Celia Kitzinger. "Telling it straight? Dictionary definitions of women's genitals," Journal of Sociolinguistics, 5(2001), pp. 214-232.
- *Dundes, Alan. "Texture, Text and Context" pp. 20-32, pp. 290-292 in his Interpreting Folklore (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1980).
- *Glassie, Henry. "Moral Lore of Folklore." Folklore Forum, 16(1983), pp. 123-154.
- *Nehring, Cristina. "The Higher Yearning: bringing Eros back to academe," Harper's Magazine (September 2001), pp. 64-72.
- *Noyes, Dorothy. "Folklore" in Social Science Encyclopedia, ed. by Adam Kuper and Jessica Kuper.

Plummer, Ken. Telling Sexual Stories. Read pp. 1-45. Finish by first quiz.

Weeks, Jeffrey. Sexuality.

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

Bible: to be read aloud in class.

- *Decameron, First Day, first story; Fourth Day, fifth story; Fifth Day, tenth story.

*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.

*Ellington, Laura L. "'Then You Know How I Feel': Empathy, Identification and Reflexivity in Fieldwork," Qualitative Inquiry, 4(1998), pp. 492-514.

*Fine, Gary Alan. "Ten Lies of Ethnography: Moral Dilemmas of Field Research," Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 22(1993), pp. 267-294.

*Neustadt, Kathy. "Folkloristics of Licking." Journal of American Folklore, 107(1994), pp. 181-196.

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*Shanafelt, Robert. "Idols of Our Tribes?: Relativism, Truth and Falsity in Ethnographic Fieldwork and Cross-cultural Interaction," Critique of Anthropology, 22(2002)pp. 7-29.

<http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:8226/FSIP?sici=0308->

[275X%2820020301%2922%3A1%3C7%3AIOOTRT%3E&dbname=ECO_FT](http://proxy.library.upenn.edu:8226/FSIP?sici=0308-275X%2820020301%2922%3A1%3C7%3AIOOTRT%3E&dbname=ECO_FT)

recommended:

O'Reilly, Karen. Ethnographic Methods. London: Routledge, 2005.

February 12-The Body Sexual, part 2

part one of paper due on February 12

February 17/19- Representations of Femininity/Masculinity

Guerrilla Girls Staff. Bitches, Bimbos, and Ballbreakers: The Guerrilla Girls Illustrated History of Females. (New York: Penguin, 2003).

Pascoe, C.J. Dude You're a Fag. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007).

*Davies, Christie. "Jokes about Jewish Women and Australian Men," chapter 4, pp. 77-107 from Mirth of Nations (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2002).

*Kuther, Tara L. and Erin McDonald. "Early adolescents' experiences with, and views of, Barbie," Adolescence , 39(2004), pp.39-51.

*Supplementary reading: "Gender, Sex and Culture," "Gender Identity," and "Gender Roles" from Encyclopedia of Psychology. Washington, D.C.: American Psychological Association ; Oxford ; New York : Oxford University Press, 2000.

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

* Brown, Karen McCarthy. "Mimesis in the Face of Fear: Femme Queens, Butch Queens, and Gender Play in the Houses of Greater Newark," pp. 208-227 in Passing: Identity and Interpretation in Sexuality, Race and Religion, ed. by Maria Carla Sanchez and Linda Schlossberg (New York: New York University Press, 2001).

March 24/26—Sexuality and belief systems

Film: the Polygamists

Ingraham, Chrys. White Weddings.

*Foster, Lawrence. Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century, pp. 226-247.

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

*Maines, Rachel P. Technology of Orgasm, pp. 1-20. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999).

April 7/9--Sexual Humor/Urban Legends

part two of paper due April 10

Legman, Gershon. No Laughing Matter : an Analysis of Sexual Humor.

Originally published: Rationale of the Dirty Joke.

Read any 3 chapters. On reserve in Rosengarten.

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.

*Gray, Kevin. "Whatever Happened to AIDS and Straight Men," Details, March 2004, 261-267.

*Smith, Paul. "Rumour, Gossip and Hearsay: The Folklore of a Pandemic," pp. 95-121 in Talking AIDS: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome, ed. by Diane Goldstein.

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