

History 229: "Sexuality and Popular Culture in America, 1945 to the present"
MW – 12:30-1:45
Sears 480

Lyz Bly, ABD
Office address: 12 Mather House
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This course focuses on historical discourses on sexuality in popular culture of the post World War II United States. We will explore and analyze the ways in which sexuality and the body were framed and understood using a variety of historical texts and primary sources (everything from more traditional sources such as printed materials to films, television episodes and clips, music and sound lyrics, zines, graphic novels, and music videos). Secondary sources include history essays and monographs, as well as articles by scholars employing critical theory. As historians/history students, we will explore the ways in which the products of popular culture perpetuate power structures and construct sexual “norms” and “transgressions.” Moreover, we will examine how individuals contribute to and undermine discourses on sexuality as consumers and creators of popular culture.

Objectives: By the end of this course students should be able comfortably use and interpret primary pop culture sources in their own research. The major question underlying our work in this course is this: “What can we learn about the history of sexuality in post WWII America from the films, music, television shows, and popular literature of this era?” On December 5 (the last day of the semester), students should be comfortable interpreting artifacts of American popular culture; ultimately, they should be able to answer this question, and/or have a general knowledge of the theoretical tools cultural historians use to “read” this kind of primary source. They will also be familiar with current debates in the study of pop culture, particularly as those debates relate to sexuality. Students should also demonstrate improved writing, discussion, reading, and analytic skills.

Prerequisites for the course: There are no prerequisites for this class; however, if you feel that you need additional background on post-World War II American History, please see me so that I can suggest a good general text for you to peruse.

Grading: For the semester grade, I will use the Case grading system of A, B, C, D, and F. However, up to that point, I will assign grades that fall in between. Grading is confidential.

Accommodations: During the semester I am prepared to meet with students individually, either during office hours or by appointment. I am particularly interested in meeting with students with disabilities who are registered with the Coordinator of Disability Services (368.5230), who may need individual arrangements.

Assignments:

Attendance and Participation: *All class meetings are mandatory and active participation in discussions is essential.* Absence on discussion days will weigh more heavily than on lecture and film/visual resource days. If you are absent more than five days without an appropriate excuse, you will receive a failing grade in the course.

Attendance and participation make up 20% of your semester grade.

Journals: 20% See appended.

Media Day Presentation: 20% See appended.

In class group assignments: 10% See appended.

Research Paper: 30% See appended.

Extra credit: Throughout the semester, I will indicate that extra credit (between 1-5 points) will be given for participation in or attendance at a particular, related event. If you know/learn of an event that you would like to put up for consideration for extra credit, please let me know at least one week prior to the date of the event. You should provide the date/time/place of the event and explain why you think it is a relevant extra credit opportunity.

Extensions, absences, late papers, and paper formatting:

I do not take late papers. Papers should be turned in at the beginning of class on the date they are due. The final research paper should be turned in by 5:00 p.m. on the due date; if I am not in my office, the paper should be stamped and initialed by Nancy Kryz or Marissa Ross in the History Department main office in Mather House and placed in my mailbox. Note that the History department office is closed after 5:00 p.m.

I do not give individual extensions – unless you have a very good reason, which you will need to discuss with me. On occasion I will grant extensions to the entire class; however, we will talk about reasons for an extension as a group and a decision will be made based on what I think is best for all of you.

Paper format and citation style

Please use standard margins (left and right = 1.25", top and bottom = 1"), twelve-point font, and double spacing. Use the Chicago Manual citation style and foot/endnote all quotations and any ideas that are paraphrased or summarized. Visit this site for Chicago Style formatting information/guidelines: http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html. Two good rules for citing sources: 1) If in doubt, footnote! 2) If you have questions about citing sources, ask your professor for assistance. Plagiarism is unacceptable and will be handled according to Case's disciplinary policy.

Absences: You are required to be in class unless you are very ill, there has been a family tragedy, or there is an important family event that you must attend. Plane trips, sporting events, and work for other classes (including exams) are not considered excusable absences. If you miss a scheduled appointment with me (an appointment made outside of office hours), it will count as an absence on your class record.

My contract with you: As your professor, it is my job to convey information, help you work on skills relevant to the historical discipline, and to encourage your intellectual growth. I will not hold classes over the designated time limit, nor add extra assignments or class meetings (excluding extra credit events, which are not mandatory). I am available to talk with you during my office hours or by appointment.

Respect/confidentiality clause: Some of the topics covered in this course are controversial and may at times incite intense debate and discussion. Every person has the right to express her/his informed opinion and is expected to listen to the thoughts and informed opinions of their peers and instructor. The goal is to keep discussions centered on assigned readings; doing so will help discussions stay on track and help us avoid addressing these issues from a personal vantage point. That said any personal experiences that are shared within the context of the class should be kept confidential. If a discussion, reading, or primary source makes you uncomfortable do not suffer in silence! Please make arrangements to speak with me during office hours or at another time that is convenient for you.

Required Texts are available at the campus bookstore or online – all books can be purchased inexpensively online through Amazon.com's used book option. Please note that you should be certain that you are ordering the correct edition (you can be certain of this by making sure that the ISBN numbers match those listed below). NOTE: if you get your books online, please order them on time, you **must** have them in hand at least one week before the class in which they will be discussed.

Texts for the course:

The History of Sexuality: Volume I, An Introduction, Michel Foucault (New York, NY: Random House, Inc., Vintage Books, 1990), ISBN 0-679-72469-9.

From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond: Cultural Images & the Shaping of U.S. Social Policy, Sue Jewell (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), ISBN 0-415-04253-4

Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media, Susan Douglas (New York, NY: Random House: Times Books, 1994), ISBN 0-8129-2206-9

Pimps Up, Ho's Down: Hip Hop's Hold on Young Black Women, T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting (New York and London: New York University Press, 2007), ISBN 978-0-8147-4014-9.

The Valley of the Dolls, Jacqueline Susann (New York, NY: Grove Press, 1997), ISBN 0-8021-3519-6

Cunt: A Declaration of Independence, Inga Muscio (New York, NY: Seal Press, 2001), ISBN 1-58005-075-1

Additional reading: Essays and chapters from various texts will be assigned each week. These materials will be available to you on Blackboard. Students should bring all readings to class, which means that you will need to bring printed copies of materials posted on BB. You may also bring your laptop if you prefer to save paper and printing costs (laptops are only to be used to access readings during class discussion; if you think that you'll be tempted to check email, work on assignments for other courses, or shop online, please leave your laptop at home or in your bag.)

Notes on reading: Students are required to engage the material. For some of you this may mean reading every word, for others it may mean reading "objectively" – with a pencil and paper in hand, taking notes, but not reading everything in entirety. My requirements are that you 1) understand and critique the arguments made in secondary readings; 2) can take a "historian's" approach to the primary documents – that you read them to enhance both your understanding and your ability to critique lectures and secondary readings. **Please bring the day's reading materials with you to class.**

Notes on films and other visual sources: We will watch many films and engage material/cultural sources in this class. While this is an enjoyable way to learn history, it is not intended to be a passive

experience. When we watch a film or view primary visual source materials in class, take notes and think about how these primary sources connect to the lectures and readings. Also, you will use pop culture sources for your final research project; as you watch films/television shows/music videos, etc. in class, think about how you might engage such sources in your final research paper. Use your notes to ask questions and raise issues when we discuss these sources.

Schedule:

Week 1:

Monday, August 24

Introduction – review syllabus, introduce students/instructor; What is popular culture? Cultural studies? Cultural history? Discuss the intersection of sexuality and pop culture; what is “discourse,” or, more specifically, what do we mean when we say “the discourse on sexuality”?

Watch in class: Sex education films from the 1940s and 50s.

Wednesday, August 26

Introduction + discussion – History of Sexuality: An Introduction

Reading: Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I: An Introduction* Parts I, II, and III (pp. 1-74)

Journals due

Week 2:

Film night TBD: *The Notorious Bettie Page* (2005)

Monday, August 31

“Shady Ladies” and Domestic Goddesses: White Femininity and Sexuality After World War II

Reading: excerpts from Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (Chapter 1 “Containment at Home: Cold War, Warm Hearth,” Chapter 4 “Explosive Issues: Sex, Women, and the Bomb,” and Chapter 5 “Brinkmanship: Sexual Containment on the Home Front”)

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Journals returned

Wednesday, September 2

“Shady Ladies” and Domestic Goddesses, continued

Reading: chapters from Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (Chapter 2 “Mama Said” and Chapter 4 “Why the Shirelles Mattered”); excerpt from Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth Century America* (“Sex Control”)

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Watch in class: clips from *The Donna Reed Show*, *I Love Lucy*, *Some Like It Hot* (1955), *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* (1955)

Week 3

Monday, September 7

NO CLASS—Labor Day holiday

Wednesday, September 9

Race, Sex, and Censorship in Pop Culture and Popular Literature of the 1950s

Readings: Whitney Strub, “Black and White and Banned All Over: Race, Censorship, and Obscenity in Postwar Memphis,” *Journal of Social History* (Spring 2007); Douglas Field, “Looking for Jimmy Baldwin: Sex, Privacy, and Black Nationalist Fervor,” *Callaloo* (2004); primary source readings

TBD

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Journals due

Week 4

Monday, September 14

Things are not as They Seem: 1955 and the Incongruent Emergence of Rock 'n Roll

Readings: Richard A. Peterson, "Why 1955?: Explaining the Advent of Rock Music," from *Popular Music* (Volume 9, No. 1, January 1990); Mark Duffett, "Caught in a Trap?: Beyond Pop Theory's 'Butch' Construction of Male Elvis Fans," from *Popular Music* (Volume 20, No. 3, January 2001)

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Watch in class: Excerpts from Elvis Presley films: *Loving You* (1957) and *Flaming Star* (1960); clip from Elvis' 1956 appearance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*

Journals returned

Wednesday, September 16

The Significance of Cultural Imagery: Black Womanhood and Sexuality in the White Mind

Readings: Excerpts from Sue Jewell, *From Mammy to Miss America and Beyond: Cultural Images & the Shaping of U.S. Social Policy*; Deborah Gray White, chapter 1 "Jezebel and Mammy: The Mythology of Female Slavery," from *Ar'n't I a Woman?*; Elwood Watson and Darcy Martin, "The Miss America Pageant: Pluralism, Femininity, and Cinderella All in One," from *The Journal of Popular Culture* (Vol. 24, Issue 1, 2004).

GRAY WHITE READING ON BLACKBOARD; Watson/Martin reading available via JSTOR

Watch/listen to in class: Excerpts from *Julia* (NBC tv series, 1968-1971); Eartha Kitt as Catwoman on the 1960s *Batman* show; songs by Kitt, including "Santa Baby" and "I Want to Be Evil," Vanessa Williams interview—1984 Miss America <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFSPS6XXAji>

Journals returned

Week 5

Monday, September 21

Genies, Witches, Warlocks, and Devils: Hetero-normativity and Feminist/Queer Politics on the Sixties Small Screen

Reading: "Notes on 'Camp'," from Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*; Susan J. Douglas, *Where the Girls Are: Growing Up Female with the Mass Media* (Chapter 6 "Genies and Witches"); "Domesticating the Enemy: 'Bewitched' and the Seventies Sitcom," David Allen Case from *The Seventies: The Age of Glitter in Popular Culture*

Excluding Douglas, READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Journals due

Wednesday, September 23

Genies, Witches, Warlocks, and Devils: Hetero-normativity and Feminist/Queer Politics on the Small (and Big) Screen (continued)

Watch in class: Clips from *Bewitched*, *Lost in Space*, *I Dream of Genie*, and *The Munsters*, scenes from Russ Meyer's *Faster Pussycat Kill... Kill!* (1965)

Journals returned

Week 6

Monday, September 28

The Valley of the Dolls: Sex and Drugs in Popular Fiction

Reading: Jacqueline Susann, *The Valley of the Dolls* (1966)

Wednesday, September 30

In class group assignment based on *The Valley of the Dolls* TBD

Week 7

Monday October 5

The Pill, Abortion, and Reproductive Rights in Pop Culture

Jennifer Nelson Readings: "Fetal Images: The Power of Visual Culture in the Politics of Reproduction," Rosalind Pollack Petchesky (134-150) in *The Gender/Sexuality Reader*; "Introduction: From Abortion to Reproductive Rights" and "'An Instrument of Genocide': The Black Nationalist Campaign Against Birth Control," Jennifer Nelson, *Women of Color and the Reproductive Rights Movement* (Nelson book excerpts will be handed out at the end of class on week 4). FILMS: *Nova - The Miracle of Life; If These Walls Could Talk*.

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Watch/listen to in class: *Maude* ("Maude Has an Abortion" episode, November 1972); *Mary Hartman, Mary Hartman*; "Abortion Song," by the Chicago Women's Liberation Rock Band
Journals due

Wednesday, October 7

Sketching Revolution: Wimmin Comics and Feminist Visions of Female Sexual Power

Reading: Excerpts from Trina Robbins, *From Girls to Grrrlz: A History of Wimmin Comics from Teens to Zines*

In-class "interpreting primary sources" group assignment using a variety of wimmin/feminist-produced comics from the late sixties and seventies.

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Journals returned

Week 8

Monday, October 12

Rape and Sexual Violence on the Big and Small Screen

"Exploitation Meets Direct Cinema: Yoko Ono's *Rape* and the Trash Cinema of Michael and Roberta Findlay," Joan Hawkins from *Cutting Edge: Art-Horror and the Horrific Avant-garde*; Sarah Projansky, "The Elusive/Ubiquitous Representation of Rape: A Historical Survey of Rape in U.S. Film, 1903-1972" (*Cinema Journal*, Vol. 41, No. 1 [Autumn 2001], pp. 63-90).

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Wednesday, October 14

Black Sexuality, "The Man," and Blaxploitation Films

Readings: "Identity, Value, and the Work of Genre: Black Action Films," Charles Kronengold, *The Seventies: The Age of Glitter in Popular Culture*; Chapter 6 "The Sexual Politics of Black Womanhood," from Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought*

Watch in class: clips from *Foxy Brown* (1974); *Shaft* (1971)

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Journals due

Week 9

Monday, October 19

NO CLASS—Fall Break

Film night TBD: *Gay Sex in the 70s* (2005)

Wednesday, October 21

“Nothing is Wrong if it Feels Good”: Triple X in the 1970s

Reading: Peter Braunstein, “ ‘Adults Only’: The Construction of an Erotic City in New York During the 1970s,” from Beth Bailey and David Farber, *America in the Seventies*

READING AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Watch in class: clips from *Cruising* (1977), *Deep Throat* (1972) (censored and condensed) <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LVq4E4hpbM>, Lou Reed *Walk on the Wild Side* (1972) (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qkwD261MHsc>), *Hustler*—clips from *The People vs. Larry Flynt* (1996)

Journals returned

Week 10

Monday, October 26

“She’s My Cherry Pie”: Pleasure and Power in 1970s and 80s Hard Rock and Metal

Reading: Susan Fast, “Re-Thinking Issues of Gender and Sexuality in Led Zeppelin: A Woman’s View of Pleasure and Power in Hard Rock,” from *American Music* (Volume 17, No. 3, Autumn 1999); additional reading TBD

READING AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Watch/listen to in class: Warrant, *Cherry Pie* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GdDxz2bkfhE>; Led Zeppelin, *Whole Lotta Love* http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zB_DOA2AL7Q; AC/DC, *You Shook Me All Night Long* <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bomv-6CJSfM>

Wednesday, October 28

“Sex is Ugly, Sex is Boring”: 1980s Punk and the “End” of Sexuality

Readings and primary sources TBD

Journals due

Week 11

Monday, November 2

NO CLASS—Individual meetings with professor to turn in/discuss research paper bibliographies and outlines

Bibliographies/outlines are 10% of the research paper grade

Wednesday, November 4

The AIDS Crisis and Popular Culture

Readings: TBD

AIDS Memorial Quilt www.aidsquilt.org; excerpts from Tony Kushner’s *Angels in America* (1993, HBO production 2003)

Journals returned

Week 12

Monday, November 9

The Sexual Politics of Rap and Hip Hop in the 1990s

“Prologue,” “Introduction,” and Chapters 1-3, from T. Denean Sharpley-Whiting, *Pimps Up, Ho’s Down: Hip Hop’s Hold on Young Black Women*

Wednesday, November 11

The Sexual Politics of Rap and Hip Hop in the 1990s, continued

Reading: Chapters 4 & 5 of *Pimps Up, Ho’s Down*

Watch in class: Dead Prez, "It's Bigger Than Hip Hop"
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8tYoOTeEkgM&feature=related>); Salt-N-Pepa "Push It"
(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BCV5yGKWjv4>); other songs/music videos TBD

Journals due

Week 13

Monday, November 16

Material Bodies: Sexuality, Fitness, and Corporeal "Management"

Readings: "Material Girl: The Effacements of Postmodern Culture," Susan Bordo (pp. 335-358); "Excerpt from 'Introduction' to *Bodies That Matter*," Judith Butler (pp. 531-542); "The End of the Body?," Emily Martin (543-558) all three essays from Roger N. Lancaster & Micaela Di Leonardo, editors, *The Gender/Sexuality Reader*; "Vulva Goldmine: The New Culture of Vaginal Reconstruction," Julia Scheeres, from *Bitch: Feminist Response to Pop Culture* (Winter 2000)

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Journals returned

Wednesday, November 18

Pornography, Feminism, and Censorship in the Popular Mind

Readings: "Negotiating Sex and Gender in the Attorney General's Commission on Pornography," Carole S. Vance in (440-452) from Roger N. Lancaster & Micaela Di Leonardo, editors, *The Gender/Sexuality Reader*; comprehensive/qualifying exam essay on second and third wave feminism and pornography, Lyz Bly; excerpts from Nadine Strossen, *Defending Pornography: Free Speech, Sex and the Fight for Women's Rights*

READINGS AVAILABLE ON BLACKBOARD

Week 14

Monday, November 23

Pornography, Feminism, and Censorship in the Popular Mind, continued

Readings: Interviews from Andrea Juno, *RE:Search: Angry Women* "Annie Sprinkle," "Karen Finley," "Carolee Schneeman," "Holly Hughes," Lydia Lunch," "Kathy Acker," from *Angry Women*
Watch/view/read in class: Selected text and images from *RE:Search: Bob Flanagan: Supermasochist*; excerpts from Annie Sprinkle's book, *Annie Sprinkle: Post-Porn Modernist*

Wednesday, November 25

NO CLASS—research day

Week 15

Monday, November 30

GenXers/Riot Grrrls and the 1990s Discourse on Incest and Sexual Abuse

Reading: Mélişe Lafrance, "Cultures of Injury: Courtney Love on Violence Against Women and the Patriarchal Aesthetic," in *Disruptive Divas: Feminism, Identity & Popular Music*; Henry A. Giroux, "Teenage Sexuality, Body Politics and the Pedagogy of Display," in *Youth Culture: Identity in a Postmodern World*; excerpts from Inga Muscio, *Cunt: A Declaration of Independence*
Watch/view/listen to in class: Kathleen Hanna, spoken word performance: "The Middle of the Night in My House" <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odPLi4SvdkE>; selections from riot grrrl fanzines (essays/rants on incest, sexual abuse); selections from Courtney Love's published journal, *Dirty Blonde*; various riot grrrl songs/lyrics TBD

Reading: Inga Muscio, *Cunt* (first half)

Wednesday, December 2

Sexuality and/as Spectacle

Reading: *Cunt* (second half) and excerpts from Jon Stratton, *The Desirable Body: Cultural Fetishism and the Erotics of Consumption*

Discussion and course wrap-up

Journals due

Final research paper is due on Monday, December 14, by 12:00 noon in my mailbox in Mather House. I will pick up papers at 12:15 on that day – any paper turned in after that time will be considered late.

Media Day Presentation (20% of semester grade):

We are all consumers of popular culture and have our favorite films, music, videos, television shows, magazines, etc., and our favorite genres have a history – or origins. At the beginning of the semester the class will be divided into groups and assigned a presentation date/topic. Each group member will choose a different medium (television show, music, film, music video, magazine) and show their example on their assigned date. Each group has 10-15 minutes to play/show their examples and to explain the historical connections between their chosen media and the day's topic.

Journals (20% of semester grade):

You are required to keep a journal for this course. The goal of this ongoing assignment is for you to write (on a regular basis) your reactions and responses to the readings, lectures, discussions, and media from class. This is also a place for you to pose questions or make comments that you may not be comfortable stating in class. You can also make notes on the progress of your research project and comment on contemporary news or pop cultural events, tying them into what you're learning in the class. Feel free to write about the pop culture that you consume – what are your thoughts/reactions to it? If you were a historian of the future, what might you be able to say about the history of the early 21st century? You may handwrite or type your entries – either way, all entries should be kept in chronological order in one binder. The journals will not be graded based on grammar and spelling; however, if you choose to handwrite your entries, make sure that they are legible.

Research Paper (30% of semester grade):

The final research project should be 10-15 pages in length (plus bibliography), and be double-spaced in 12 point font. In consultation with the professor each student is to design and execute an original research paper that addresses a topic that falls within the scope of this class (American, between 1945 and 2001, focusing on some aspect of sexuality popular culture). An original research paper does not merely synthesize the work of other historians and scholars, but also incorporates your own original interpretation of primary documentation. For example, if you were to write a research paper on images of women in advertising in 1970 versus 1990, you would not simply turn to books on advertising, but do your own research on materials printed during those two decades. The topic of the paper should be determined based on your interests, but the topic needs to be approved by the instructor. ***Bibliographies/outlines are due on November 2 and are 10% of the research paper grade*** An outline of your final paper is due on Monday, November 23.

In Class Group Assignments (10% of semester grade):

During the course of the semester you will be given assignments that must be completed in class. Each assignment is different (see outline) and you will work with your colleagues and give a short presentation at the end of the class/work period.

EXTREMELY important = citations:

You **MUST** cite all sources of information using FOOTNOTES or ENDNOTES. Parenthetical notes are not acceptable. You must include a full bibliography (not simply sources cited). Again, visit this site for Chicago Style formatting information/guidelines:

http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html.

SOURCES: Your Internet dependence must not exceed your dependence upon/use of written materials. Whenever possible, restrict your use of Internet sources to .edu or .org, but use even these sources with great caution. There is a lot of false information on the Internet. The exception to this is digitalized materials, which are essentially the same as written texts. **DO NOT** use the Wikipedia for this course. The Wikipedia is gaining ground as far as accuracy is concerned, but it is not yet entirely precise; therefore, it is best to stay clear of it, especially for original research.

Outlines of final research paper are due on Monday, November 23.

Final research paper is due on Monday, December 15, by 12:00 noon in my mailbox in Mather House. I will pick up papers at 12:15 on that day – any paper turned in after that time will be considered late.