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CLE B202
Office hours M 2:30 – 4:30 or by appointment

History 306
Spring 2025
COR B112
MR 10-11:20

SEX AND POWER IN AMERICAN HISTORY



Course Description:

From conquest through the present day, sex and sexuality have been both means and symbols for establishing power relations in American society. This course examines the centrality of sex to the first encounters between indigenous people and settlers, the organization of North American colonies, the creation of a slave society, the origins of feminism, the development of American masculinity, the growth of capitalism, and the establishment of the modern state. We will study many varieties of sexual behaviour, including marital sex, commercial sex, rape, same-sex sex, and self-sex. Small-group discussions will analyze both primary and secondary sources.

Territory Acknowledgment

We acknowledge and respect the ɫəkʷəŋən peoples on whose traditional territory the university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical relationships with the land continue to this day.

Required Text:

Rebecca L. Davis, *Fierce Desires: A New History of Sex and Sexuality in America* (Norton, 2024) 978-1631496578

Grading:

Discussions	15%
Perusall	25%
Primary Source Analysis	15%
Final Project bibliography	5%
Final Project	25%
Final Exam	15%

To pass this course it is essential that you complete the final project and pass the final exam. Supplemental exams will not be offered for students who receive an E grade.

Grading and Assignments:

1. Discussions 15%

There are three discussions scheduled during the semester. Attendance at each is mandatory and participation will be graded. I will divide the class into discussion sections at the beginning of the third week of class.

Your discussion grade for the semester will be assessed according to the following criteria:

80-100 = Demonstrates having completed and understood the assigned readings. Participates actively and often. Identifies important ideas/points in the readings, asks questions, makes connections between readings, and responds to other students' comments. Takes responsibility for moving the discussion forward. Willing to consider alternative interpretations/arguments. Listens when other students talk. Incorporates, expands upon, or argues respectfully with other students' ideas.

70-79 = Demonstrates having completed and understood the assigned readings. Participates actively, but less often than an "A." Keeps comments focused on the assigned readings and topic. Willing to consider alternative arguments/ideas. Shows evidence of active listening when others talk.

60-69 = May demonstrate minimal evidence of having completed some of the assigned reading. Participates infrequently or makes comments that are unrelated to the assigned reading or topic. May listen to others, but shows little evidence of active listening. Is not disruptive or disrespectful.

50-59 = Is tardy or leaves class early. Shows little evidence of having completed the assigned readings. Does not participate or makes comments wholly unrelated to the reading. Does not listen to others. Is sometimes disruptive or disrespectful.

2. Perusall 25%

Ten journal articles and book chapters (all secondary source readings except the textbook by Davis) will be posted on Perusall, a free social-annotation software that allows students to mark-up texts as they read, and to see and respond to other students' commentary. All readings must be completed on Perusall before the class meeting for which they're assigned. The theory behind Perusall is that humans are intrinsically motivated to seek out "collective effervescence," that feeling of excitement generated by participating in a group experience. By making reading into a group experience, Perusall is designed to increase students' completion of assigned texts. This replaces the traditional discussion board. You can connect with another student by using @ in your annotations, which will send that student a notification. You can also upvote questions or comments that you find especially provocative or insightful. If you experience any accessibility issues, let me know as soon as possible. The software scores your performance on each reading from a scale of 1-3, according to quantity and quality. I will release the scores after each reading. Your total grade in Perusall will be a percentage based on the total points you receive, out of a possible score of 30. If you have questions about your scores or want me to have a closer look, email me and I'll be happy to work with you to make sure you understand the scoring and can be successful.

To register, go to Perusall.com. The Perusall registration code is CLEVES-AW9EP
The course will begin on Perusall as of January 6.

3. Primary Source Analysis 15%

Identify and analyze a primary source assigned for one of the following class dates: January 27, February 10, March 6, March 13, or March 27. You must select a primary source from one of the assigned databases or links and complete an analysis of it using the primary source rubric that I will discuss in class on January 16. The Primary Source Analysis is due in PDF form on Brightspace the day for which the sources are assigned. There will be 5% deducted per day on late submissions, and the assignment will not be accepted more than a week after due date without advance written permission.

4. Final Project Bibliography 5%

Due March 3. Submit an annotated bibliography of 4-5 primary sources and 4-5 academic secondary sources (journal articles or book chapters) for your final project. The bibliography should be divided into two sections. Give complete bibliographic information for each source. Begin the bibliography with a research question and a one paragraph description of the project. Do not include any assigned class readings. Describe each source in one or two sentences (this is the annotation). The primary sources must be

accessible to you—either at a local archive you can visit, or published in a primary source collection, or available digitized online. Submit the bibliography as a PDF to Brightspace by midnight on March 3. There will be 5% deducted per day on late submissions, and the assignment will not be accepted more than a week after due date without advance written permission.

5. Final Project 25%

Due March 31. Your final project should explore a specific topic in the history of sex and power in the United States or Canada. You have enormous latitude over what form your final project will take. It can be a traditional research paper (Option A), or it can be a non-traditional “un-paper” (Option B).

Final Project Option A: Paper

If you choose to write a research paper on the subject of your choice, please follow these guidelines. The paper must draw from at least 4-5 primary sources, and at least 4-5 academic secondary sources (peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters). If you are uncertain whether your sources meet these criteria, please bring a bibliography to me during office hours to double check. Inadequate sourcing will lead to a low grade. The paper must have a thesis, which is another way of saying it must make an argument about the past. Good papers should be “historicist,” looking at the past through a historical lens, rather than imposing present-day assumptions on the evidence. Good papers should also be well supported with quotations from the primary sources, and show an understanding of what other historians have said on the topic (historiography). Papers must be 1,500 – 2,000 words. Please submit a word count at the end of the paper. Papers should follow the citation instructions found in the History Department Style Guide available on the History Department website. You must include a bibliography. I encourage you to come and see me during office hours to discuss your ideas for the paper. I am always happy to help students find sources, refine ideas, and think through arguments. Grading will be according to conventional standards. Papers are due in PDF format submitted to Brightspace by midnight on April 3. There will be 5% deducted per day on late submissions, and the assignment will not be accepted more than a week after due date without advance written permission.

Final Project Option B: Un-paper

An un-paper is a project that engages with historical material in an unconventional fashion. For example, an un-paper could take the form of a musical composition; a podcast; or a material object. You might create a work of visual art or a video game. The possibilities are limitless. I strongly encourage you to visit during my office hours, or by appointment, in order to discuss your ideas with me. I’m happy to give feedback and advice. Along with your un-paper, you must also submit a **brief reflection** (2 pages) explaining why you chose this approach, what you learned, and how it connects to the themes of sex and power, as well as a bibliography listing at least 4-5 primary sources and

4-5 academic secondary sources you consulted for the research. The un-paper will be graded on creativity, effort, and an assessment of whether the historical approach shows engagement with course questions and materials. The un-paper is not graded on quality of artistry, but on the project's success at communicating history in a non-traditional format. You may include your own self-assessment of your performance in the reflection, which I will take into account when arriving at a final grade. The un-paper should be submitted in class on April 3, and any written components must be submitted in PDF format to Brightspace by midnight on April 3. There will be 5% deducted per day on late submissions, and the assignment will not be accepted more than a week after due date without advance written permission.

Copying the language or ideas of other authors without attribution constitutes plagiarism. For clarification of the definition of plagiarism see the memo from the History Department attached to the end of this syllabus. Any instances of plagiarism will be referred directly to the Assistant Chair of the History Department.

6. Final Exam 15%

An in-person in-class final exam will be held on the last day of class to assess your comprehension of the course materials, both lectures and readings. The exam will be multiple choice and short answer. You may bring and consult printed-out lecture and reading notes, as well as the hard copy of Rebecca Davis's *Fierce Desires*. You must receive a passing grade on this final exam to pass the course.

Accommodations

Students with diverse learning styles and needs are welcome in this course. In particular, if you have a disability/health consideration that may require accommodations, please tell me and/or the Centre for Accessible Learning (CAL) as soon as possible. The CAL staff are available by appointment to assess specific needs, provide referrals and arrange appropriate accommodations <https://www.uvic.ca/accessible-learning/index.php>. The sooner you let us know your needs the quicker we can assist you in achieving your learning goals in this course.

Course Conduct

I hope the spirit of generosity and respect will guide us in this class. I am eager to be teaching and learning with you in the classroom. I am inspired by the motto of the French philosopher Michel de Montaigne (1533-1592), "que sais-je?" or *what do I know*, which expresses an intellectual humility that should guide all of us in our learning. Please approach class discussions with an openness to your own fallibility and a generosity of spirit to others. Discussions in this class can touch on triggering and touchy subjects. Be kind.

Class Schedule

M Jan 6	Introduction to the History of Sexuality
Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i> , intro, pp ix-xxi	
R Jan 9	Sex & Conquest
Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i> , Chapter 1-2, pp3-36 Jamey Jespersen, "Trans misogyny in the colonial archive: Re-membering trans feminine life and death in New Spain, 1604-1821," <i>Gender and History</i> 2024 36(1): 91-111	
M Jan 13	How Puritanical were the Puritans?
Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i> , Chapter 3, pp37-56 Richard Godbeer, "'A Complete Body of Divinity': The Puritans and Sex" in <i>Sexual Revolution in Early America</i> (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002) 52-83	
R Jan 16	Sex and the Salem Witch Trials and Introduction to Primary Sources
Louis J. Kern, "Eros, the Devil, and the Cunning Woman: Sexuality and the Supernatural in European Antecedents and in the Seventeenth-Century Salem Witchcraft Cases," in Brian P. Levack, ed. <i>Witchcraft in the British Isles and New England: New Perspectives on Witchcraft, Magic, and Demonology</i> (Taylor & Francis, 2001): 499-534 *recommended to bring a laptop or tablet to class this day so you can explore the Salem Witch Trials Documentary Archive and Transcription Project https://salem.lib.virginia.edu/home.html	
M Jan 20	The Sexual Origins of American Slavery
Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i> , Chapter 4, pp57-72 Jennifer Morgan "'Some Could Suckle Over their Shoulders': Male Travelers, Female Bodies, and the Gendering of Racial Ideology, 1500-1770" <i>William and Mary Quarterly</i> 3 rd Ser., LIV (1997): 167-192	
R Jan 23	DISCUSSION # 1: Sex and Sexuality in Colonial America Group 1: Cornett B112 Group 2: Cornett A128 Group 3: Cornett B111
M Jan 27	The First Sexual Revolution

<p>Clare Lyons "Mapping an Atlantic Sexual Culture: Homoeroticism in Eighteenth-Century Philadelphia" <i>William and Mary Quarterly</i> Ser. 3 60 (2003), 119-154</p> <p>Gale Primary Sources: Archives of Sexuality and Gender – find it through the library listing of databases. Use the advance Search function to limit search results to 1700-1800 and English. That should produce close to 300 texts to choose from.</p>	
R Jan 30	Sex and the Nineteenth-Century City
<p>Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i>, Chapter 5-6, pp73-108</p>	
M Feb 3	Pretty Waiter Girls
<p>Kazuhiro Oharazeki "Chapter 4: Racialized, Exploited, and Excluded: The Lives of Japanese Prostitutes and Barmaids in the North American West" in <i>Japanese Prostitutes in the North American West, 1887-1920</i> (University of Washington Press, 2016): 95-136</p>	
R Feb 6	Victorianism
<p>Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i>, Chapter 7, pp111-129</p> <p>Use the database https://victorianresearch.org/ to access Victorian periodicals, fiction, and other digitized nineteenth century sources. It's okay to choose a source that was printed in Britain not the United States.</p>	
M Feb 10	Between Women: Sex and Politics in First-Wave Feminism
<p>Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i>, Chapter 8-9, pp130-170</p>	
R Feb 13	<p>Discussion # 2: Sex and Sexuality in the 19th century</p> <p>Group 1: Cornett B112</p> <p>Group 2: Cornett A128</p> <p>Group 3: Cornett B111</p>
Feb 17-21	SPRING BREAK
M Feb 24	Capitalism, Sex, and Gender in the Jazz Age
<p>Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i>, Chapter 10-11, pp171-206</p>	
R Feb 27	Rape, Race, and Jim Crow
<p>Danielle L. McGuire, "It Was Like All of Us Had Been Raped": Sexual Violence, Community Mobilization, and the African-American Freedom Struggle" <i>Journal of American History</i> 91.3 (Dec 2004): 906-931.</p>	

M March 3	The Sexual Revolution Before the 60s
<p>Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i>, Chapter 12, pp209-226</p> <p>Amanda Littauer, "Going Steady: Permissiveness, Petting, and Premarital Sex in the 1950s," in <i>Bad Girls: Young Women, Sex, and Rebellion Before the Sixties</i> (University of North Carolina Press, 2015)</p>	
R March 6	Women of Colour Feminism
<p>Combahee River Collective Statement</p> <p>Black Woman's Manifesto</p> <p>The Young Lords Position Paper on Women</p> <p>Women of La Raza Unite!</p> <p>National Black Feminist Organization Statement of Purpose, 1973</p>	
M March 10	The Lavender Scare
<p>Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i>, Chapter 13, pp227-248</p> <p>Anna Lvovsky, "Plainclothes Decoys and the Limits of Criminal Justice," in <i>Vice Patrol: Cops, Courts, and the Struggle over Urban Gay Life before Stonewall</i> (University of Chicago Press, 2022): 99-141</p>	
R March 13	Gay Riots and Gay Rights
<p>Explore JSTOR "Independent Voices: LGBT collection"</p>	
M March 17	Guest Lecture: TA Emilia Koehn on
<p>Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i>, Chapters 14-16, pp249-309</p>	
R March 20	Documentary Screening: "United in Anger"
<p>Davis, <i>Fierce Desires</i>, Chapter 17, pp310-330</p>	
M March 24	<p>Discussion # 3: Sex and Sexuality in the 20th c.</p> <p>Group 1: Cornett B112</p> <p>Group 2: MacLaurin D109</p> <p>Group 3: MacLaurin D203</p>
R March 27	Guest Lecture: PhD candidate Jamey Jespersen on Trans History

Davis, *Fierce Desires*, Chapter 18 & epilogue, pp331-346

Kadji Amin, "We Are All Nonbinary: A Brief History of Accidents," *Representations*, 158 (June 2022): 106-119

Explore the Digital Transgender Archive www.digitaltransgenderarchive.net

M March 31	Past Histories and Future Directions
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FINAL PROJECT DUE

Bring in news articles that you think speak to the future of sex and power in North America in the twenty-first century.

R April 3	FINAL EXAM
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