

Professor Haynes  
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Office hours: 321 McKenzie  
T 4-5:30, W 4-5:30 and by appointment

**HIST 410**  
**Sex in America**  
**T/R 2:00-3:20**  
**16 Pacific Hall**

This course explores major developments in the history of sexuality in the United States. From the colonial period to the present, the peoples of North America have experienced sex simultaneously as an intimate dimension of life and a contested domain of power. It can often be tempting to think of the past as a time when sexuality was more “traditional” or more “repressed” (depending on one’s view). Yet historians have found evidence of sexual diversity, debate, and change over time.

Taking this dynamism as a starting point, we will endeavor to think like historians about sex. When did modern sexual identities take shape? How have sexual ideologies informed social hierarchies of race, class, and gender? Who has managed to influence and transform those ideologies, and by what means? Why have sexual scandals, controversies, and policies so consistently defined American politics? To what extent has the nation itself—its wars for independence and conquest, as well as its construction of citizenship—been forged through sexual ideologies and practices?

By the end of this course, advanced undergraduate students should be able to develop independent answers to large-scale historical inquiries such as these by interpreting primary and secondary sources.

### **Reading**

Four book-length primary sources are **required**, all available at the Duck store, through various electronic platforms, and on reserve at the library.

1. Hannah Foster, *The Coquette*, (Oxford edition, with introduction by Cathy Davidson)
2. Sigmund Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sex* (Perseus, 2000)
3. Jean Toomer, *Cane* (Norton second ed., 2011)
4. Ann Bannon, *Beebo Brinker* (any edition)

There is no required textbook in this class. The lectures will describe the historical context. For additional historical interpretations, or to browse possible term paper ideas, consult the following **optional** resources as needed:

- D’Emilio & Freedman, *Intimate Matters*
- Duberman, Vicinus, Chauncey, *Hidden from History*
- Foster, *Long Before Stonewall*
- Peiss, *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*
- Reis, *American Sexual Histories*

## Assignments and Grading

- 40% Primary source interpretations (10% each)
- 10% Participation (Blackboard posts)
- 25% Term paper (including 5% for turning in a complete, coherent rough draft on time)
- 25% Final exam

### Guidelines:

Primary sources are the basic tools of the historian, and the bulk of our written assignments are intended to exercise the skill of historical interpretation. While three out of four of our assigned book-length primary sources are works of fiction, all are considered primary sources since they were produced during the period they depict. Some are lyrical, others pulpy—the goal is to approach all of them in a spirit of historical, rather than literary, inquiry.

Since this is a 400-level class, some experience interpreting primary sources is assumed. However, there is no prerequisite for this class. Primary source interpretation means explaining the content and significance of the source by paying critical attention to the ways in which the standpoint of its author, the intended audience, and the historical context shaped its messages. What claims does the author make about sex? How does she or he define sex? If no definition is offered, what does that omission suggest? What assumptions, stated or unstated, are evident? What conclusions can (and cannot) be drawn from this source about sexual cultures or politics during the period in which it was written? Why might historians consider this source particularly significant to the history of sex in the U.S.? If you need more direct guidance about how to approach a primary source, please see me in office hours. All papers should be uploaded via Safeassign as Word documents in 12-point, Times New Roman font. The four interpretive essays should be two to four pages in length.

When no book-length interpretation is due, you'll be responsible for participating in an online interpretive discussion of the assigned primary sources for that week. The participation grade assesses the quality as well as the quantity of your online comments and questions. It would be entirely possible to earn an A in participation without attending the lectures. However, it would be impossible to pass the final exam, term paper, or most primary source interpretations without the contextual information offered there. In addition, the lectures will often invite student thoughts and questions. The bottom line is that lecture attendance is voluntary but strongly recommended. If you miss a lecture for any reason, it is your responsibility to obtain notes from a classmate (please do not ask me to repeat the lecture during office hours). When you do attend lectures, your focus on the subject at hand is required. I reserve the right to ask any student to leave if they are engaged in any distracting behavior—including texting—during the lecture.

The term paper will isolate one theme or question that emerges from reading several of the assigned primary sources (short and long) in conjunction with one another. The goal is to track one theme over time, analyzing the changes and continuities apparent in the sources. Examples might include “Theories of Male Sexuality,” “Same-sex Eroticism,” or “Reproductive Politics.” Refer to lecture for some of the contextual information. In addition, each term paper should

utilize at least one secondary source of your own choosing (a book or scholarly article written by a professional historian and published by an academic press). Should you need advice about topics, secondary sources, or details about how to write the paper itself, please see me in office hours. The final paper should be ten to twelve pages in length.

The final exam will be an in-class, greenbook exam consisting of short-answer identifications drawn from lectures. It will be cumulative. I will occasionally announce potential IDs during the lectures and will circulate a study guide during week 10. On the day of the exam, you'll choose from a list of terms to identify. Each answer should correctly convey basic information (who, what, where, and when), then explain in your own words its historical significance (why does it matter?).

Grading rubric:

My grading practices adhere to the History Department's standards, as follows. I do not change grades retroactively.

A+: Work of unusual distinction. Therefore, in the History Department, this grade is rarely awarded.

A: Work that distinguishes itself by the excellence of its grasp of the material and the precision and insight of its argument, in addition to being well executed and reasonably free of errors.

B: Work that satisfies main criteria of the assignment, and demonstrates command of the material, but does not achieve the level of excellence that characterizes work of A quality.

C: Work that demonstrates a rudimentary grasp of the material and satisfies at least some of the assigned criteria reasonably well.

D: Work that demonstrates a poor grasp of the material and/or is executed with little regard for college standards, but which exhibits some engagement with the material.

F: Work that is weak in every aspect, demonstrating a basic misunderstanding of the material and/or disregard for the assigned question.

# Schedule

## Week 1. Sexual Contact

T April 1: Course introduction; researching the history of sex

R April 3: Sex in contact zones

- Read: Primary sources online
- Write: Blackboard discussion post

## Week 2. Power and Control

T April 8: Of wives and wenches

R April 10: The "Pure Nazarite" and his felonious neighbors

- Read: Primary sources online
- Write: Blackboard discussion post

## Week 3. Virtue and Vice

T April 15: A sexual revolution?

R April 17: Libertine republicanism

- Read: Hannah Foster, *The Coquette*
- Write: Primary source interpretation 1

## Week 4. Reformers and Radicals

T April 22: Abolitionists, moral reformers, utopians

R April 24: Intimate frontiers

- Read: Primary sources online
- Write: Blackboard discussion post.
- Extra credit opportunity: Knight Library Browsing Room, 4 p.m.  
*Reflections Unheard: Black Women in Civil Rights*

## Week 5. Battle Scars

T April 29: Sexual violence after slavery

R May 1: Social purity vs. free love

- Read: Wells
- Write: Blackboard discussion post; term paper topic proposal (3-5 sentences, typed, hard-copy, due in class. Include the title of a secondary source you might use).

## Week 6. Modernizing Sex

T May 6: Sexology and the birth of heterosexuality

R May 8: Adolescence, dating, and sex education

- Freud, *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*
- Write: Primary source interpretation 2

## Week 7. Sexual Revolution

T May 13: Harlem renaissance & the "Pansy craze"

R May 15: Reproductive politics

- Read: Jean Toomer, *Cane*
- Write: Primary source interpretation 3

### **Week 8. Sexual Liberalism**

T May 20: Victory girls, playboys, and domestic containment

R May 22: No class

- Read: Ann Bannon, *Beebo Brinker*
- Write: Primary source interpretation 4

### **Week 9. People's Movements**

T May 27: Sex in Black Freedom Struggle and Third World alliances

R May 29: Feminist Sexualities & Gay Liberation

- Read: Primary sources online
- Blackboard discussion post

### **Week 10. Sex Wars**

T June 3: Fighting AIDS

R June 5: Raunch culture and the new cult of purity

- Term paper rough draft due

**Final exam Monday June 9, 1 pm.**

**Final term papers due Friday, June 13, 5 p.m.**