**04:192:473:01: Sexual Communication**

Spring 2013

Tuesdays 11:30 – 2:30

SCI 203

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Office Hours: Tuesdays 3:00 – 5:00pm, or by appt. Office Hours: Mon 3-5 or Tues 3-5

**COURSE OVERVIEW**

Sex and sexuality have fascinated cultures for centuries. They have been topics of poetry and song, targets of policy and advocacy, mechanisms of power and influence, and foundations of love and romance. In this course, we will examine the ways in which people communicate about sex in a variety of contexts. Interpersonally, we will explore how individuals negotiate and consent to sexual contact, as well as how they disclose their sexual preferences. Relationally, we will examine the implications of sexual communication for managing casual sexual relationships and for enhancing intimacy in more established romantic relationships. In health contexts, we will discuss the implications of sexually transmitted diseases for negotiating sexual relationships. Finally, we will explore the ways in which new media and technologies have changed sexual communication and relationships in today’s society. Through course readings, vivid class discussions, and investigative research, students will learn about sexual communication from a variety of perspectives.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

By the end of this course, students should be able to:

1. Describe the challenges associated with sexual communication in various interpersonal and relational contexts.
2. Describe the implications of new technologies and work environments for sexual communication.
3. Demonstrate an ability to assimilate readings from class and to write in a manner that is appropriate for the social sciences.
4. Demonstrate an ability to use communication concepts to analyze human behavior and to apply those concepts to improve social and professional life.
5. Demonstrate competency in library research and an ability to integrate resources to understand a communication phenomenon related to sex.
6. Design survey items to evaluate research questions and hypotheses related to sexual experiences.
7. Apply basic statistics to analyze data about sexual practices, communication, and relationships.

REQUIRED READING

All of the readings are available on Sakai. The readings are organized under the Resources tab with a folder for each week of the semester. All readings should be completed prior to class time on the day that they are assigned in the syllabus.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

**Participation: 50 Points**

Your attendance and participation during class meetings is encouraged and expected. You are expected to respond to course material and to complete and discuss exercises in class meetings. To provide you with feedback on your class contributions, your participation each week will be evaluated on a 5 point scale. Your final participation score will be computed by adding your participation scores across all weeks of the semester and your 10 highest scores will be counted toward your final grade.

**Preparation Papers (3 required @ 50 points each; 150 total points possible):**

You are expected to complete 3 preparation papers over the course of the semester. Preparation papers should (a) summarize the readings from a particular week, (b) identify and reflect on the major themes that were gleaned from the readings from that week, and (c) highlight the major implications and social questions that emerge from the readings from that week. Preparation papers are designed to help “prepare” you for class discussions on the readings; thus, preparation papers will be due in class on the day that we are discussing the content you plan to write about. (For example, if you want to write a preparation paper on sexual identity, it is due in class on February 5.) Preparation papers will NOT be accepted late. Preparation papers should be approximately 4-6 pages in length. You may replace your lowest grade by writing a fourth paper and the three highest grades will count toward your final grade.

**Exams (2 required @ 100 points each; 200 total points possible):**

Two exams, each worth 100 points, will be given. Exams will include short answer and essay questions based on readings and lectures. The exams will be administered in class on the dates listed in the syllabus.

Group Research Project: 100 Points

Groups of 4-5 students will work together to complete a research project on some topic related to sexual communication. As a class, we will collectively develop a survey that will be administered to students in other communication classes at Rutgers. Each group will be asked to provide questions to include in the survey that they will analyze as part of their group project. In class, I will teach you how to develop survey questions and how to conduct basic statistical procedures to analyze your data. The paper will include a literature review on your chosen topic that describes the topic in detail and discusses its relationship to other variables, a research question or hypothesis you intend to investigate in the data, a description of the sample and method used to investigate your research questions, a description of the results of your inquiry, and a discussion of the implications of those results for understanding sexual communication more generally. Each group will present their results in a 10-12 minute presentation during the final class period.

**Group Penalty (-20 points possible):**

Group members do not always participate equally in the preparation of group projects; however, all group members share equally in the final grade. To assess individual contributions to the group project, each student will be asked to rate the extent to which each of his or her group members contributed to the semester project. The average of the ratings you receive from members of your group, coupled with my own evaluation of your contribution, will be factored into your final course grade.

**Extra Credit:**

Students will be asked to participate in “Minute Responses” during many class periods, which are designed to give students an opportunity to reflect and write about the ideas that have been covered in class. Minute responses are graded on a credit/no credit basis and each minute response that you complete will be worth 1 point of extra credit toward your final grade. You MUST be in class to complete the minute responses.

It may also be possible to earn extra credit by taking part in research projects conducted by faculty and graduate students in the Department of Communication. Any such research participation opportunities will be announced in class.

**Final Grade**: Your final grade will be determined by summing scores on all assignments completed this semester. Final grades will be assigned according to the following scale:

A (90-100%) = 450-500 Points

B+ (87-89.9%) = 435-449 Points

B (80-86.9%) = 400-434 Points

C+ (77-79.9%) = 385-399 Points

C (70-76.9%) = 350-384 Points

D (60-69.9%) = 300-349 Points

F (00-59.9%) = 000-299 Points

All grades are final. Please do not ask to have your grade changed for reasons other than mathematical error. Applying subjective standards after the fact invalidates the standards applied to the entire class and is unfair to every student.

**Good Things to Know**

Reading Assignments: Reading assignments noted on the class schedule are all accessible as PDF documents on Sakai. Please complete all readings prior to class.

Attendance: Attending class is up to you; however, you should be aware that: (a) material presented in class is often not available from other resources, (b) I assume you receive any announcements or handouts provided during class, and (c) missed minute responses cannot be made up under any circumstances.

Late Assignments: Late assignments will be docked 10% of the total possible points for that assignment per day that the assignment is late. You are welcome to submit work in advance of class; however, work submitted via email will not be accepted without prior approval.

Illnesses and Other Personal Emergencies: If you experience an unavoidable personal situation that prevents you from completing work on time, you should inform me before the work is due. Extensions will be granted for substantiated and documented emergencies.

Make-up Exams: Make-up exams are scheduled only in cases of substantiated and unavoidable conflicts. You must notify me prior to the exam to re-schedule.

Academic Misconduct: Please be aware that dishonesty of any kind will not be tolerated in this course. Dishonesty includes, but is not limited to, cheating, plagiarizing, fabricating information or citations, facilitating acts of academic dishonesty by others, having unauthorized possession of examinations, submitting work of another person or work previously used without informing the instructor, or tampering with the academic work of other students. Students who are found to be dishonest will receive academic sanctions.

Group Responsibilities: Group projects often involve conflicts among group members. I expect that all group members will contribute to the final project, and that the group will work actively to address the conflicts that arise. If a conflict emerges within the group or problems arise because work is not shared equally, you should make me aware of those problems sooner, rather than later. Effective conflict resolution requires that problems be identified and addressed prior to the end of the semester.

Class Conduct: The content of this course can give rise to sensitive discussions at times. All students are expected to engage the course material in a mature and sensitive manner. I also expect that you will treat one another with respect both in and out of the classroom by supporting one another’s contributions to class discussion and respecting each other’s privacy.

**Course Schedule**

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| --- | --- | --- |
| Date | **Topic** | **Assigned Readings** |
| Jan  22 | Introductions & Course Overview |  |
| Jan  29 | Overview of Sex, Communication & Society | Byers, E. S. (2011). Beyond the birds and the bees and was it good for you: Thirty years of research on sexual communication. *Canadian Psychology, 52,* 20-28.  Lannutti, P. J. (2005). For better or worse: Exploring the meaning of same sex marriage within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered community. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 22,* 5-18. |
| Feb  5 | Communicating Sexual Identity | Bond, B. J., Hefner, V., & Drogos, K. L. (2009). Information seeking practices during the sexual development of lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals: The influence and effects of coming out in a mediated environment. *Sexuality and Culture: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly, 13,* 32-50.  Breshears, D. (2010). Coming out with our children: Turning points facilitating lesbian parent discourse with their children about family identity. *Communication Reports, 23,* 79-90.  Lannutti, P. J. (2011). Security, recognition, and misgivings: Exploring older same-sex couples’ experiences of legally recognized same-sex marriage. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 28,* 64-82. |
| Feb  12 | Sexual Communication in the Family | Fingerson, L. (2005). Do mothers’ opinions matter in teens’ sexual activity? *Journal of Family Issues, 26,* 947-974.  Afifi, T. D., Joseph, A., & Aldeis, D. (2008). Why can’t we just talk about it?: An observational study of parents’ and adolescents’ conversations about sex. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 23,* 689-721.  Eisenberg, M. A., Sieving, R. E., Bearinger, L. H., Swain, C., & Resnick, M. D. (2006). Parents’ communication with adolescents about sexual behavior: A missed opportunity for prevention? *Journal of Youth Adolescence, 35,* 893-902. |
| Feb  19 | Negotiating Sexual Intimacy | Metts, S., & Spitzberg, B. H. (1996). Sexual communication in interpersonal contexts: A script-based approach. In B. R. Burleson (Ed.), *Communication yearbook 19* (pp. 49-91). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.  Edgar, T., & Fitzpatrick, M. A. (1993). Expectations for sexual interaction: A cognitive test of the sequencing of sexual communication behaviors. *Health Communication, 5,* 239-261.  Theiss, J. A., & Solomon, D. H. (2007). Communication and the emotional, cognitive, and relational consequences of first sexual encounters in heterosexual dyads. *Communication Quarterly, 55*, 179-206. |
| Feb  26 | Communication in Casual Sexual Relationships | Hughes, M., Morrison, K., & Asada, K. J. K. (2005). What’s love got to do with it?: Exploring the impact of maintenance rules, love attitudes, and network support on friends with benefits relationships. *Western Journal of Communication, 69,* 49-66.  Epstein, M., Calzo, J. P., Smiler, A. P., & Ward, L. M. (2009). “Anything from making out to having sex”: Men’s negotiations of hooking up and friends with benefits scripts. *Journal of Sex Research, 46,* 414-424.  Holman, A., & Sillars, A. (2012). Talk about hooking up: The influence of college student social networks on nonrelationship sex. *Health Communication, 27,* 205-216. |
| March 5 | Communication in Committed Sexual Relationships | Christopher, F. S., & Sprecher, S. (2000). Sexuality in marriage, dating, and other relationships: A decade review. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62,* 999-1017.  Cupach, W. R., & Comstock, J. (1990). Satisfaction with sexual communication in marriage: Links to sexual satisfaction and dyadic adjustment. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 7,* 179-186.  Theiss, J. A. (2011). Modeling dyadic effects in the associations between relational uncertainty, sexual communication, and sexual satisfaction for husbands and wives. *Communication Research, 38,* 565-584*.* |
| March 12 | **EXAM 1** | |
| March  19 | **SPRING BREAK!** | |
| March 26 | Communicating about Sexual Infidelity | Vangelisti, A. L., & Gerstenberger, M. (2004). Communication and marital infidelity. In J. Duncombe, K. Harrison, G. Allen, & D. Marsden (Eds.), *The state of affairs: Explorations of infidelity and commitment* (pp. 59-78). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.  Mongeau, P. A., & Schultz, B. E. (1997). What he doesn’t know won’t hurt him (or me): Verbal responses and attributions following sexual infidelity. *Communication Reports, 10,* 143-152.  Afifi, W. A., Falato, W. L., & Weiner, J. L. (2001). Identity concerns following a severe relational transgression: The role of discovery method for the relational outcomes of infidelity. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 18,* 291-308. |
| April  2 | Sexual Communication and Alcohol | Lannutti, P. J., & Monahan, J. L. (2002). When the frame paints the picture: Alcohol consumption, relational framing, and sexual communication. *Communication Research, 29,* 390-421.  Lannutti, P. J., & Monahan, J. L. (2004). Resistance, persistence, and drinking: Examining goals of women’s refusals of unwanted sexual advances. *Western Journal of Communication, 68,* 151-169.  Flack, W. F., et al. (2007). Risk factors and consequences of unwanted sex among university students: Hooking up, alcohol, and stress response. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 22,* 139-157. |
| April  9 | Communicating about Sexual Health | Lo, S. C., Zea, M. C., & Poppen, P. J. (2009). Information, uncertainty, and disclosure in the era of HIV/AIDS. In T. D. Afifi & W. A. Afifi (Eds.), *Uncertainty, information management, and disclosure decisions: Theories and applications* (pp. 254-276). New York: Routledge.  “When you come to it you feel like a dork asking a guy to put a condom on”: Is sex education addressing young people’s understandings of risk? *Sex Education, 6,* 105-119.  Bryan, A. D., Aiken, L. S., & West, S. G. (1999). The impact of males proposing condom use on perceptions of an initial sexual encounter. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 25,* 275-286. |
| April  16 | Sexual Coercion & Unwanted Sexual Contact | Spitzberg, B. H. (1998). Sexual coercion in courtship relations. In B. H. Spitzberg & W. R. Cupach (Eds.), *The dark side of close relationships* (pp. 179-232). Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.  Byers, E. S., & Glenn, S. A. (2012). Gender differences in cognitive and affective responses to sexual coercion. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 27,* 827-845.  Katz, J. & Myhr, L. (2008). Perceived conflict patterns and relationship quality associated with verbal sexual coercion by male dating partners. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 23,* 798-814. |
| April 23 | Technology & Sexual Communication | Bergdall, A. R., et al. (2012). Love and hooking up in the new millennium: Communication technology and relationships among urban African American and Puerto Rican young adults. *Journal of Sex Research, 49,* 570-582.  Craft, A. J. (2012). Love 2.0: A quantitative exploration of sex and relationships in the virtual world Second Life. *Archives of Sexual Behavior, 12,* 939-947.  Drouin, M., & Landgraff, C. (2012). Texting, sexting, and attachment in college students’ romantic relationships. *Computers in Human Behavior, 28,* 444-449. |
| April 30 | **FINAL PAPER PRESENTATIONS** | |
| May  9 | **FINAL EXAM 12:00 – 3:00pm** | |