

**Psychology 350A: Human Sexuality**  
Winter Session 2007  
Section 901, 3 credits

**Course Instructor:**

Dr Lori Brotto

Email: [Lori.Brotto@vch.ca](mailto:Lori.Brotto@vch.ca)

Vancouver Hospital Office Tel: (604) 875-4111, ext. 68898

Office hours: Wednesdays, 3:45 – 4:45pm, Room 2524, Douglas Kenny  
Psychology Building

**Teaching Assistant:**

Jane Woo, MA

Email: [janestwoo@yahoo.com](mailto:janestwoo@yahoo.com)

Office hours: TBA

Room 1005, Kenny Building

**Course Time and Location:**

Wednesdays, Sept 5 – Nov 28, 2007, inclusive  
5pm – 7:20pm, Room Buchanan A104

**Course Description:**

This course will provide an overview of human sexuality, theory, research, and treatment, relying on theoretical and empirical research. Multiple perspectives will be presented, including psychological, biological, and socio-cultural. Topics will include: history of sex research, human sexual anatomy and physiology, healthy and abnormal sexual function, paraphilias, sexual orientation, sexually transmitted infections, HIV/AIDS, and sexuality education. Emphasis will be placed on the critical analysis of sexuality research and students will be encouraged to argue for or against a particular contentious issue in human sexuality, drawing from the scientific literature, in the form of a major paper. Students will be encouraged to develop an appreciation for the complexity of human sexuality by the end of this course.

**Class Format:**

Material will be covered in the form of lectures (2.5 hours in duration) and assigned readings. Students will be encouraged to ask questions when appropriate. Please note that some material in the examinations will not be covered in class. Therefore, it is in students' best interests to attend each class.

**Required Text:**

Hyde, J. S., DeLamater, J.D., & Byers, S.E. (2006). *Understanding Human Sexuality*. McGraw-Hill. (Third Canadian Edition). This textbook can be purchased from the UBC Bookstore. *Note that there are older versions of this textbook that do not have the Canadian update. Please only use the Canadian 3<sup>rd</sup> edition.*

**Required Readings:**

Occasionally throughout the course, there will be required journal articles to read that supplement the information in the text. You may link to a PDF copy of these articles from the course website at [www.psych.ubc.ca/~brotto](http://www.psych.ubc.ca/~brotto)

**Course Requirements and Evaluation:**

Grades in this course will be based on a Midterm Examination, a Final Examination, and a Term Paper. In the event that a student misses an examination **because of a medical emergency**, a note detailing the reason for the illness must be provided along with the physician's telephone number so that a follow-up phone call can be made, and, in such cases, a make up exam must be written within **4 days** of the missed exam date. No make up examinations will be allowed after this time period and the student will receive zero on the missed exam.

Final grades will be based as follows:

1. **Midterm Examination**                      worth 40%                      **Oct 17, 2007**  
(15 multiple choice questions, 25 fill in the blank, 3 short essays, 120 min)
2. **Final Examination**                      worth 40%                      **final exam period**  
(15 multiple choice questions, 25 fill in the blank, 3 short essays, 120 min)
3. **Term Paper**                                      worth 20%                      **due Nov 14, 2007**  
(see Essay Format)

**Exam Format:**

Examinations are comprised of multiple choice questions, fill in the blank questions, and essays. Questions may be based on ***any*** aspect of the course material, including lectures (notes on slides as well as material discussed), text and readings. Exams are non-cumulative. All exams are to be written during designated times (see above), except in the case of a serious medical emergency or if the student is writing exams with the Disability Resource Centre.

**Essay Format for Term Paper:**

Students will be required to submit a Paper by November 14, 2007; however, the paper may be handed in at any time before that. The paper must cover a topic in human sexuality in which there are at least two opposing points of view. The paper will outline the contentious issue, provide a summary of the research evidence for and against a particular argument, and then offer a conclusion **with an opinion**. A list of topics appears at the end of this syllabus; however, students are free to choose a different topic **with approval of the instructor**.

Unless there are legitimate, extenuating circumstances supported by documentation, no extensions will be granted for this paper for any reason. A 5% penalty (off your raw score) will be applied for each day the paper is submitted late. The paper must be submitted as a hard copy at the start of class on November 14. In addition, an email copy must be submitted to the TA at janestwoo@yahoo.com. Be sure to retain a copy for your own records, in the event of a loss.

Please take note of the following important dates:

- September 18, 2007: Last date for change in registration and for withdrawal from this course without withdrawal standing of "W" recorded on transcript.
- October 12, 2007: Last day for withdrawal with withdrawal standing of "W" recorded on a student's academic record

**Proposed Course Outline (subject to minor changes):**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Topic</b>	<b>Readings</b>
Sept 5	History of Sex Research	Text Ch 3
Sept 12	Sexual Anatomy, Physiology, and Hormones	Text Ch 4 (pp. 80-97),5
Sept 19	Conception & Pregnancy	Text Ch 6
Sept 26	Contraception; Sex Education	Text Ch 7 & 21
Oct 3	Sexually Transmitted Infections and HIV/AIDS	Text Ch 8
Oct 10	Sexuality and Culture	Assigned Readings
Oct 17	<b>Midterm Examination (120 min)</b>	
Oct 24	Sexual Orientation	Text Ch 15
Oct 31	Prostitution, Pornography, & Legal Issues	Text Ch 18 <i>Guest Speaker</i>
Nov 7	Sexuality and Aging	Text Ch 11 & 12
Nov 14	Sexual dysfunction in men and women	Text Ch 19
Nov 21	Paraphilias, Sexual Variations, and Gender Identity Disorders	Text Ch 14 (pp. 407-416), & 16 <i>Guest Speaker</i>
Nov 28	Sexual Coercion and Abuse	Text Ch 17

**Course Policies:**

Please turn off pagers and cell phones during class.

### **Psychology Department's Policy on Grade Distributions and Scaling**

In order to reduce grade inflation and maintain equity across multiple course sections, all psychology courses are required to comply with departmental norms regarding grade distributions. According to departmental norms, the mean grade in a 300-level class is 70 for a good class, 68 for an average class, and 66 for a weak class, with a standard deviation of 13). The corresponding figures for 100- and 200-level Psychology courses are 67, 65, and 63, with a standard deviation of 14. Scaling is likely to be used in order to comply with these norms; grades may be scaled up or down as necessary by the professor or department.

### **Cheating and Plagiarism:**

There will be no tolerance for cheating on examinations or plagiarism on papers. A student caught cheating on an examination will automatically receive a score of zero on that test. Plagiarism is the use of another author's research, ideas, or language without proper credit. According to the UBC Calendar, plagiarism is "a form of academic misconduct in which an individual submits or presents the work of another person as his or her own." Plagiarism will result in a score of zero for the paper, and may result in suspension from the University for a specified time or indefinitely. Note that UBC now subscribes to a service called TurnItIn which will be used in this course, and is designed to scan papers for plagiarized material.

### **Research Participation:**

You may participate in research conducted in the UBC Department of Psychology and earn up to 2 credits (i.e., 2 percentage points) for this course. There may be an opportunity to participate as a volunteer in psychological research related to the course material. Such research may be conducted in the classroom or in the UBC Sexual Health Laboratory, located at Vancouver Hospital. You are completely free to choose whether or not you would like to participate. Information regarding research participation will be given throughout the course. This may be a fun and an interesting way to learn more about topics covered in the course.

## Essay Format

The essay should be selected from the list of options below. The essay must be 10 pages (not including references), double-spaced, with 12-point font and 1" margins. There should be at least 10 references, mostly from empirical papers although books and other relevant documents are acceptable. Standard APA format should be followed (Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5<sup>th</sup> Edition). You should arrange for a Medline, PsychInfo, or PubMed tutorial at Woodward Library if you are unfamiliar with how to perform a literature search for relevant articles. The paper should include the following sections:

- An overview of the contentious issue. What is the **specific** question you will argue for and against? It should be framed in the form of a debate question. Provide a background to the topic (approx 1-2 pages)
- 3 Arguments, supported by scientific (empirical) papers, **for** the issue
- 3 Arguments, supported by scientific (empirical) papers, **against** the issue
- Your conclusion on the contentious issue (i.e., take a side!) based on the scientific articles you read. End the paper with your opinion on the topic.

Your paper is worth 20% of your final grade. A hard copy **as well as** an emailed copy to the TA is due on **November 14, 2007** but feel free to hand it in at any time before this date. A late penalty of 5% per day will be applied after Nov 14, 2007. No exceptions to handing in the paper late will be accepted for any reason. Your paper will be graded based on:

- (i) **Content** – Are you using the scientific literature to outline three arguments for (2 points each) and three arguments against (2 points each) the issue? Do you refer to all or most of the research done in this area? (12 points)
- (ii) **Format** – Do you carefully outline the issue, providing the relevant background history to the topic? Does your opinion follow logically from the evidence you presented for and against? Is the paper well-written with accurate citations, and using APA format? Is complex information explained/presented well? Did you stay within the space limitations? Is there "flow" to the paper? (6 points)
- (iii) **Conclusion and opinion** – Do you synthesize the relevant research and conclude with your own opinion? (2 points)

## Essay Topics (choose one)

### Research methods

1. How generalizable are the findings from sexuality studies? Some would argue that volunteers for sexuality studies are a select sample of individuals that differ in important ways from the normal population. Argue for and against

the generalizability and applicability of sexuality studies for the general population using specific examples to support your argument.

2. The Internet can be a valuable source of research subjects yielding large sample sizes for survey research. Are Internet sexuality studies and data collection techniques methodologically sound? What advantages and disadvantages can you foresee obtaining subjects in this way?
3. Discuss the role of animal models in accounting for human sexual behaviour. Can animals be studied as a means of understanding human sexual behaviour and physiology?
4. Much recent attention has focused on cross-cultural differences in a number of psychological domains. Discuss whether or not cultural/ethnic differences in sexuality exist and whether or not you think it is important to include ethnicity as a methodological variable in sexuality research.
5. Federal research funding is currently supporting many sexuality researchers in Canada and in the U.S.A. This has come under heated debate in the U.S.A. recently – the argument being that money going to support sex research is being diverted from more medically important areas of study -- and several sex researchers have been threatened to have their research funding removed. What are the arguments for and against the use of Federal Funding for sex research?

### **Biological foundations**

6. Discuss the well-known findings of sex-differences in brain anatomy. Do these sex-differences in structure have any relevance for sex-differences in sexual behaviour? In other words, do differences between men and women in sexual behaviour and attitudes relate to differences in neural anatomy or physiology? Argue for and against the importance of neural anatomy in accounting for these sex differences.
7. Do non-human animals have orgasms?
8. There has been much debate on the role of the female orgasm. Does the female orgasm play an evolutionary role in reproduction or it is more a purely pleasurable phenomenon not related to evolutionary or reproductive mechanisms?
9. Hormones have been suggested to play a major role in the sexuality of aging humans although this is controversial and others argue that age-related changes in sexuality are due to psychological, and not hormonal variables. Outline the arguments for hormonal versus non-hormonal/psychological explanations in age-related changes in sexuality.

### **Reproduction and contraception**

10. The issue of eugenics and genetic engineering is a controversial one. Argue for or against genetic engineering with a particular focus on its use in controlling unwanted births. Include information on the issue of sterilization into your argument.

11. A contentious issue is the issue of sexual behaviour on psychiatric wards. There has recently been a movement to allow for sexual behaviour between psychiatric patients or between a patient and his/her non-patient partner in a regulated manner. Outline the arguments for and against granting permission to patients for regulated sexual behaviour on psychiatric wards.

### **Sexual behaviour**

12. Discuss theories of attractiveness. Do waist:hip ratios, facial symmetry, and other well-known phenomena of sexual attraction bear any relevance for sexual behaviour? Argue for and against this point with specific examples and drawing on research conducted in rural islands around the world.
13. Are humans naturally monogamous?
14. Polygamy for both men and women is a well-known practice in several cultures around the world. Provide evidence either for or against the notion that this is a purely evolutionarily-derived practice with true reproductive benefits

### **Sexual orientation**

15. "Reparative therapy" has been described as an effective method of "curing homosexuality". Proponents of this therapy claim excellent efficacy rates. Those opposed to this therapy claim it is a form of coercion and that homosexuality is not something that can be "cured". What are the arguments for and against reparative therapy?
16. Does male-typical behaviour (eg., playing with trucks) in young girls and female-typical behaviour (eg., playing dress-up) in young boys predict future sexual orientation? Argue for and against this with specific evidence and examples.
17. Some would argue that certain biological markers (eg., height, weight, digit length, birth order, handedness) correlate well with sexual orientation thus making homosexuality more of a biological phenomenon. Others argue that this correlational research does not imply causation, and there is more in favour of non-biological, cultural, and social explanations for homosexuality. What are the arguments?

### **Sexual dysfunction and sexual variation**

18. Currently "Dyspareunia" is listed as a Sexual Disorder in the DSM-IV-TR. Some have argued that it is mislocated, and instead, should be classified as a Pain Disorder. What are the arguments?
19. Hypersexuality has been described as a real phenomenon requiring clinical attention whereas others feel it is not a "diagnosis" but a lifestyle preference that is entirely normative. Should it be classified as a true "diagnosis" or does this reflect "normal sexuality"?
20. Has pornography become too accessible and acceptable to the general public? Make a strong argument for and against with valid evidence.

21. The paraphilias are currently included in the DSM-IV (diagnostic statistical manual of mental disorders). Are paraphilias psychopathological or do they represent the normal range of human sexual behaviour?
22. Sex reassignment surgery (SRS) for transsexuals is a contentious issue given that many transsexuals regret their decision after it is too late. Should SRS be excluded as an option for transsexuals and instead be replaced exclusively with psychotherapy?

### **Sexual assault and coercion**

23. Argue for and against the castration of sex offenders.
24. What is the role of the physician in difficult cases of ambiguous external genitalia at birth. Use the "John-Joan" case as one example to outline the role of primary health care providers in helping parents make decisions about their newborn babies. Argue for and against the physician influencing the parents decision making.
25. Many explanations have been put forth to explain the inappropriate behaviour of sex offenders. Are sex offenders more likely to have been abused as children? Argue for and against this statement.

### **Sexual education**

26. Federally-funded sexuality education programs in the United States and Canada differ in their philosophies and teaching approaches. Argue for and against the inclusion of an "abstinence only" component in sexuality education outlining the pros and cons of this teaching.