

Sexuality and Psychology: Integrating Theory and Practice

Spring 2025

Tuesdays 2:00-4:45PM, Room A341

Instructor: Stephanie Lyon, Ph.D. (she/her/they/them)

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**Course Description:**

In this course, students will develop a foundational understanding of human sexuality, exploring its various dimensions including anatomy, physiology, and sexual/gender identity development. Students will be exposed to common sexual challenges and disorders as outlined in the DSM-5, and will critically examine notions of sexual normalcy and pathology. Through an integrative lens, students will be exposed to therapeutic techniques for addressing sexual concerns within the context of psychotherapy, and will begin developing the professional skills necessary to provide nonjudgmental, culturally responsive, and inclusive sexuality-informed care.

**Course Objectives:**

By the end of the course, students will have:

- An introductory knowledge of the human sexuality
- An understanding of common sexual challenges described in the DSM as well as alternate frameworks for understanding non-optimal sexual functioning
- A familiarity with some of the different methods for addressing sexual challenges in clients including:
  - Sensate Focus
  - Behavioral Sex Therapy
  - Narrative Sex Therapy
  - Existential Sex Therapy
- An understanding of the concerns of erotically marginalized populations
- An understanding of how intersectional identities impact sexual functioning

**Course Requirements:**

Participation

The most important part of this class is active participation. This course requires a great of openness and sensitivity. Your willingness to dive in, to share your reactions (and questions, and frustrations), and to help create a safe environment to support your fellow students is the single most important thing that's being asked of you.

## Assignments:

### 1. In-Class Presentation

Chose one Disorder of Sexual Functioning (as per DSM-5) to present to the class. The presentation should include: diagnostic criteria, etiology/developmental antecedents, treatment considerations, and alternative lenses through which this presenting problem could be viewed. Presentations should be 20-30 minutes in length including Q&A with classmates.

### 2. Sexual History

Conduct a (real or fictional) comprehensive sexual history and produce a written narrative including important experiences from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Incorporate societal influences, the impact of trauma (if any), and the individual's current sexual functioning and goals. It is required that students without clinical experience and supervision opt into the fictional option for this assignment. This paper should be 5-7 double spaced pages.

### 3. Cultural Reflection

Analyze media representations of sexuality (e.g., in films, TV shows, advertisements) and critically examine how different portrayals contribute to societal attitudes, stereotypes, and norms surrounding sexuality. This paper should be 4-6 double spaced pages.

## **Grading:**

Your grade will be based on: (1) class participation as defined above (35%); (2) the in-class presentation (20%); (3) the written sexual history (25%); (4) the written cultural reflection (20%).

## **Attendance:**

Attendance is mandatory, and unexcused absences or persistent lateness will negatively affect your grade. If a religious holiday falls on a day that class meets, let me know in advance, and we will discuss how you can make up the material. If you are sick, please email or text me to let me know you will miss class. More than one unexcused absence and more than 2 unexcused late arrivals (15+ minutes) will result in a five point reduction in your final grade. A student with more than two unexcused absences will not pass the course. Schedule a meeting with me to address any attendance concerns.

## **Use of Generative AI Policy**

Learning how to effectively and safely use AI functions (such as ChatGPT) is becoming increasingly important in academia. When used properly, Generative AI (GenAI) can enhance our work and save us time, but when used improperly, it can border on plagiarism. If you have used GenAI on anything you submit for this class, please include a written addendum to your assignment explaining (1) your original prompt to the chatbot, and which GenAI platform you used; (2) some examples of incorrect/unhelpful information that the chatbot provided to you; and, (3) a description of how you checked, reworked, and revised your prompts/the content provided by the chatbot so that your final product was

theoretically sound, factually accurate, and reflected your unique writing voice and style. If you have any questions about the use of GenAI for this course, please ask during class or office hours.

**Required Texts:**

None. All required readings (book chapters, articles) will be posted on Canvas in a pdf format. If you require another format for accessibility reasons, please let me know ASAP.

**Recommended Texts:**

- Nagoski, E. (2015). *Come as you Are*. Simon & Schuster.
- Nagoski, E. (2024). *Come Together*. Ballantine Books.
- Buehler, S. (2022). *What Every Mental Health Professional Needs to Know About Sex*. Springer.

**Instructor Contact Information and Availability:**

I am happy to schedule individual in person or Zoom meetings with any of you for any reason. If you find yourself struggling with course content, please seek me out and ask for help. I prefer to communicate about logistics by email. I can also be reached by phone and text via the contact information provided at the top of this syllabus. My walk-in office hours are every Tuesday from 1-2pm.

**Statement on Disabilities:**

Rutgers University welcomes students with disabilities into all of the University's educational programs. To receive consideration for official accommodations, a student with a disability should contact the appropriate disability services office at the campus where they are officially enrolled, participate in an intake interview, and provide documentation: <https://ods.rutgers.edu/students/documentation-guidelines>.

If the documentation supports your request for reasonable accommodations, your campus's disability services office will provide you with a Letter of Accommodations. Please share this letter with your instructors and discuss the accommodations with them as early in your courses as possible. To begin this process, please complete the Registration form: <https://webapps.rutgers.edu/student-ods/forms/registration>

Anyone who is not willing or able to navigate this process should feel free to contact me directly, in whatever method works best, to let me know how the classroom environment and our assignments can be tailored to meet your needs. You do **not** need to disclose diagnoses to me to receive support or unofficial accommodation.

**Statement on Academic Integrity:**

The University's academic integrity policy, to which this class will adhere, can be reviewed at: <http://academicintegrity.rutgers.edu/academic-integrity-at-rutgers/>

**Statement on Diversity and Identities:**

An effective learning environment values diversity, and diverse perspectives will be celebrated and treated with respect in this class.

Every student, regardless of sex, gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, size, disability, or any other identity category, is a valuable addition to our community. In fact, it is the diversity of our experiences that will enrich the course content, as our fundamental goal is to expand and deepen our understanding of the human condition. I encourage every student to share their own experiences as they choose, but I also stress that no student is ever presumed or asked to speak for anything or anyone more than their own experience.

In this classroom, you have the right to determine your own identity. You have the right to be called by whatever name you wish, and for that name to be pronounced correctly. You have the right to determine your own pronouns. You have the right to adjust any of these at any point. Please note that class rosters are typically provided to me with students' legal names. Please advise me at any time if your name and/or preferred pronouns differ from what is on the roster so that I may make necessary adjustments.

As a privileged, white, AFAB person, I know I have gaps in understanding when it comes to many of these subjects. If there are aspects of this course that result in barriers to your inclusion in our learning community, or if anything at all comes up that impacts your ability to participate fully in this course, please contact me privately without fear of reprisal. Any suggestions for how I can make this class a more inclusive and inviting space are encouraged and appreciated.

### **Topics, Readings, and Assignments Schedule:**

January 21 – Week 1

#### The Beginnings: What is Human Sexuality & Why Does it Matter?

Readings:

1. Lorde, A., Abelove, H., Barale, M. A., & Halperin, D. M. (1984). Uses of the erotic: The erotic as power.
2. Mitchell, K. R., Lewis, R., O'Sullivan, L. F., & Fortenberry, J. D. (2021). What is sexual wellbeing and why does it matter for public health? *The Lancet Public Health*, 6(8), e608-e613.
3. Buehler, S. (2022). Chapter 2: Sexuality and the Self of the Therapist. *What Every Mental Health Professional Needs to Know About Sex*. (pp. 11-17). Springer.

January 28 – Week 2

#### Gender/Sexual Identity Development

Readings:

1. Buehler, S. (2022). Chapter 3: Sexual Anatomy and Psychosexual Development. *What Every Mental Health Professional Needs to Know About Sex*. (pp. 27-32). Springer.
2. Bosse, J. D. (2019). Sexual and gender identity development in young adults and implications for healthcare. *Current Sexual Health Reports*, 11, 274-286.

3. Fausto-Sterling, A. (2019). Gender/sex, sexual orientation, and identity are in the body: How did they get there?. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 56(4-5), 529-555.

February 4 – Week 3

NO CLASS (Stephanie out of town for a training) – WORKING WEEK!

Readings:

1. None

**Assignment Due:** Presentation topics must be pitched/approved by this date

February 11 – Week 4

Theories of Sexuality in Psychology: Freud, Kinsey, & Beyond

1. Escoffier, J. (2020). Kinsey, psychoanalysis and the theory of sexuality. *Sexologies*, 6(2), 35a-42.
2. Tiefer, L. (2012). Medicalizations and demedicalizations of sexuality therapies. *Journal of Sex Research*, 49(4), 311-318.

February 18 – Week 5

Week 5: Human Sexual Functioning: What is “Normal”?

1. Meston, C. M., & Buss, D. M. (2007). Why humans have sex. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 36, 477-507.
2. Nagoski, E. (2015). Anatomy. *Come as you Are* (pp. 15-41). Simon & Schuster.
3. Buehler, S. (2022). Chapter 3: Sexual Anatomy and Psychosexual Development. *What Every Mental Health Professional Needs to Know About Sex*. (pp. 19-27). Springer.
4. Fahs, B., & Plante, R. (2017). On ‘good sex’ and other dangerous ideas: Women narrate their joyous and happy sexual encounters. *Journal of Gender Studies*, 26(1), 33-44.

February 25 – Week 6

Common Sexual Dysfunctions (Diagnostic Criteria)

1. Lewis, R. W., Fugl-Meyer, K. S., Bosch, R., Fugl-Meyer, A. R., Laumann, E. O., Lizza, E., & Martin-Morales, A. (2004). Epidemiology/risk factors of sexual dysfunction. *The journal of sexual medicine*, 1(1), 35-39.
2. American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.), pp. 423 – 450 “Sexual Dysfunction” & pp. 685 – 705 “Paraphilic Disorders”

**Assignment Due:** In-Class Presentation Day 1

March 4 – Week 7

Sexual Challenges: A Depathologizing Lens

1. Nagoski, E. (2015). The Dual Control Model. *Come as you Are* (pp. 42-67). Simon & Schuster.
2. Nagoski, E. (2024). Center Pleasure. *Come Together* (pp. 21-48). Simon & Schuster.

**Assignment Due:** In-Class Presentation Day 2 (if necessary)

March 11 – Week 8

Integrative Sex Therapy in Practice: Behavioral Approaches

1. Avery-Clark, C., & Weiner, L. (2017). A traditional Masters and Johnson behavioral approach to sex therapy. *The Wiley handbook of sex therapy*, 163-189.
2. McCarthy, B., & Wald, L. (2017). A Psychobiosocial Approach to Sex Therapy. *The Wiley handbook of sex therapy*, 190-201.

March 25 – Week 9

Integrative Sex Therapy in Practice: Relational/Narrative Approaches

1. Iasenza, S. (2020). Chapter 3: The Sexual History. *Transforming sexual narratives: A relational approach to sex therapy*. (pp. 47-67) Routledge.
2. Writing—and Rewriting—Your Sex Script: A Q&A with Ian Kerner, PhD, LMFT in GOOP, November 1, 2022
3. Kleinplatz, P. (2017). An Existential-Experiential Approach to Sex Therapy. *The Wiley handbook of sex therapy*, 190-201.

April 1 – Week 10

Sexual Functioning in the Sexual Minority (LGBA) Population

1. Iasenza, S. (2010). What is queer about sex?: Expanding sexual frames in theory and practice. *Family Process*, 49(3), 291-308.
2. Berry, M. D., & Lezos, A. N. (2017). Inclusive sex therapy practices: A qualitative study of the techniques sex therapists use when working with diverse sexual populations. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 32(1), 2-21.
3. Brotto, L. A., & Yule, M. (2017). Asexuality: Sexual orientation, paraphilia, sexual dysfunction, or none of the above?. *Archives of sexual behavior*, 46, 619-627.

April 8 – Week 11

Sexual Functioning in the trans and non-binary population

1. Whitney, N., Samuel, A., Douglass, L., Strand, N. K., & Hamidian Jahromi, A. (2022). Avoiding Assumptions: Sexual Function in Transgender and Non-Binary Individuals. *The journal of sexual medicine*, 19(6), 1032-1034
2. “Let’s Talk About Sex (for Trans Men)” by Buck Angel from The Advocate, 2016
3. “My New Vagina Won’t Make Me Happy” by Andrea Long Chu from The New York Times, 2018

April 15 – Week 12

Erotically Marginalized Populations (w/ Guest Speaker TBA)

1. Berry, M. D., & Barker, M. (2014). Extraordinary interventions for extraordinary clients: Existential sex therapy and open non-monogamy. *Sexual and Relationship Therapy*, 29(1), 21-30.
2. Nichols, M. (2014). Psychotherapeutic issues with “kinky” clients: Clinical problems, yours and theirs. In *Sadomasochism* (pp. 281-300). Routledge.
3. Woolfe, Z. (2016). A composer and his wife: Creativity through kink. *New York Times*, 23

**ASSIGNMENT DUE:** Written Sexual History 11:59PM

April 22 – Week 13

Sexual Dynamics Within Couples

1. Kleinplatz, P. J., Charest, M., Rosen, L. A., & Ménard, A. D. (2022). Optimal couple sexuality: A review of the (limited) literature. *Current Sexual Health Reports*, 14(2), 63-69.
2. Nagoski, E. (2015). Arousal. *Come as you Are* (pp. 189-217). Simon & Schuster.
3. Nagoski, E. (2015). Desire. *Come as you Are* (pp. 218-246). Simon & Schuster.

April 29

Week 14: Transference & Countertransference Challenges & The Role of Values (w/ Guest Speaker)

1. Kraus, S. W., Voon, V., & Potenza, M. N. (2016). Should compulsive sexual behavior be considered an addiction?. *Addiction*, 111(12), 2097-2106.
2. Levenson, J. S., Grady, M. D., & Morin, J. W. (2020). Beyond the “ick factor”: Counseling non-offending persons with pedophilia. *Clinical Social Work Journal*, 48, 380-388.

May 6

Week 15: Broaching Sexuality with Clients and Families

1. Love, M., & Farber, B. A. (2017). Let's not talk about sex. *Journal of clinical psychology*, 73(11), 1489-1498.
2. Wright, P. J., Herbenick, D., & Paul, B. (2020). Adolescent condom use, parent-adolescent sexual health communication, and pornography: Findings from a US probability sample. *Health Communication*, 35(13), 1576-1582.
3. Herbenick, D. (2023). Becoming an askable parent. *Yes Your Kid: What Parents Need to Know About Today's Teens and Sex*. BenBella Books.

May 13

**Assignment Due:** Cultural Reflection Paper – 11:59PM

RECOMMENDED BONUS READINGS

1. American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed.) – DSM 5\*
2. Iasenza, S. (2020). *Transforming sexual narratives: A relational approach to sex therapy*. Routledge.\*
3. Hall, K. S., & Binik, Y. M. (Eds.). (2020). *Principles and practice of sex therapy*. Guilford Publications.\*
4. Malone, R. M., Stewart, M. R., Gary-Smith, M., & Wadley, J. C. (Eds.). (2021). *An Intersectional Approach to Sex Therapy: Centering the Lives of Indigenous, Racialized, and People of Color*. Routledge.\*
5. Perel, E. (2006). *Mating in captivity*. New York, NY: HarperCollins.
6. Peterson, Z. D. (Ed.). (2017). *The Wiley handbook of sex therapy*. Wiley Blackwell.