Gender Studies 332 & Sociology 376: Sexuality, Biomedicine & HIV/AIDS

Winter 2016

Mondays & Wednesdays, 11AM-12:20PM

555 Clark St, Room B03

Instructor: Aaron Norton

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Office Hours:
Mondays 12:30-2PM
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Course Description:

Since the appearance of a “mysterious new illness” among gay men in the United States, HIV/AIDS has been closely associated with sexuality. This is true not only because a large percentage of HIV-transmission occurs via sexual contact, but also because of close associations between sexuality and morality and what “kinds” of people and practices are said to be more likely to spread HIV than others. In this course, we draw upon scholarship in the social sciences and humanities to examine the interplay between HIV/AIDS and sexuality, with an emphasis on the role of science and technology. How did associations between sexuality, disease and morality shape what was known about the spread of HIV early in the epidemic? How have ongoing efforts to know, treat and prevent HIV shaped sexual practices and intimacies, and vice versa? Together, will consider the complex interplay of HIV, sexuality and science across a diverse array of topics, including: the politics of HIV-risk categorization; HIV-stigma and discrimination; social movements and access to treatment; sexual practices and intimacies; and new frontiers in HIV-prevention, among others.

In Part I of the course, we will focus our attention on the early years of the epidemic. We will consider how and why public health experts struggled to understand the nature of a mysterious collection of diseases and symptoms (later named AIDS) as it disproportionately afflicted some people. To what extent did prior assumptions and stereotypes about marginalized groups shape what was known about the emerging epidemic among both the “public” and public health experts? What role did “risk” as an ostensibly scientific concept play in facilitating certain kinds of representations? In this section we will cover the nature of risk categorization, HIV-stigma, and media and scientific representations of HIV/AIDS in the United States and “in Africa.”

In Part II, we will examine social movement activism in response to the lack of available effective treatments for people with HIV and AIDS. How did some of those whose lives were affected by the AIDS epidemic respond to the stigma and institutional apathy that surrounded the illness? How did people with HIV/AIDS and their supporters come to transform the science and ethics of drug development and what role did confrontation and collaboration play in their efforts? Who was left out and why? Further, what role did racialized and sexualized narratives considered in part I play in discourses related to biomedical treatment and efforts to attain drug treatment?

Finally, in Part III, we will attend to shifts in sexual practices and intimacies as mediated by technological and behavioral interventions to combat the epidemic: HIV-testing, condoms, anti-retroviral therapy, pre-exposure prophylaxis and male circumcision. In what ways have sexual practices changed over the course of the AIDS epidemic in relation to HIV-prevention efforts? How has sexual intimacy shifted as a result of the HIV epidemic generally and HIV-prevention efforts in particular? Throughout the course, our focus will be on the interplay between science and sexuality (i.e., sexual practices, identities, intimacies and communities), but we will also pay close attention to their multiple intersections with race, gender, geography, and class.
Course Requirements

Readings:

All readings for this course will be accessible electronically as PDFs through Canvas (http://www.it.northwestern.edu/education/learning-management/login.html). Readings will be organized by week in folders under the “Files” tab in Canvas. You are encouraged, but not required, to print out these materials to bring to class. If you choose not to print them, you should have some way to access the readings during class time (either via laptop, ipads, tablets, crystal ball, etc.). You will find a schedule of readings at the end of this syllabus.

Assignments/Grades:

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<tr>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reading Responses (7)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Midterm Essay</td>
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<tr>
<td>Final Take-Home Essay</td>
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<td>Attendance</td>
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Seven Reading Responses (35% of total course grade):

For each class period, there will be one or two assigned readings (e.g., articles, book chapters) as well as optional “recommended” readings. I have tried to limit the number of pages for each class to fewer than 50, often less than that. This is to encourage you to not only do the readings, but also to take the time to absorb what you have read and develop reflections and questions about them. You must do all of the assigned the readings for every class. Beginning with Class 3, you will write responses to a series of questions about the article/book chapter for the class period in which the readings will be discussed. When there is more than one article or chapter, read everything, and then choose only one of pieces for the writing response. However, it must be an academic piece (not a newspaper or magazine article if assigned). For each chosen reading, the written response will involve three components, all submitted via a Google Form (a link to each specific set of questions will be provided ahead of each class via Canvas):

1) You will be asked to respond to a series of questions that are designed to help you think through the reading.

2) You will write about a passage from the reading that inspired or frustrated you and how it did so (160-300 words).

3) Finally, you will post two open-ended questions. I will do my best to select one or two of these questions for discussion during class, as time allows. (If I chose one of your questions for class discussion, I will not disclose who wrote it, but they should be written to stimulate class discussion and with the knowledge that your question may be shared 😊).

Important: Although you are expected to read everything that is assigned, you need only complete these writing responses for seven (7) of the class meetings. Further, for each class, please first do all of the reading and then select the one article/chapter you most want to write about (Don’t attempt to respond to both readings in your response). Finally, everyone is required to submit a response on
Sunday, JAN 9 BY 9PM for one of the readings listed for discussion on Monday, JAN 10 (Seidman or Herek). This is so I can give feedback early to make sure you’re on the right track.

Further points about the reading responses:
1. You are required to submit at least 3 of the 7 reading responses by MON FEB 1st the approximate midpoint of classes. This is an average of just one reading response per week. (However, you may certainly do more than 3 in the first half of the course if you want to get them out of the way). Please don’t wait too long to begin submitting them or you will lose an entire score. The remaining 4 required responses must be submitted by SUNDAY March 6th (but remember that each response must be submitted on time before the class in which we discuss the assigned reading).
2. Bonus: So long as you have completed three reading responses during the first half of the quarter, you may complete one additional (8th) reading response to replace your lowest grade should you not be happy with a score. *However, if you did not complete three responses during the first half of the course, you are not eligible for this option.* This is to your benefit – in a past quarter, some folks waited until the end of the quarter when things are more hectic to do their responses, and their grade suffered because they did not receive feedback early in the quarter as to how to make improvements.
3. Lateness: Responses submitted after the deadline will not be accepted.

When are my reading responses due?
- For readings to be discussed on a Monday, your responses are due by 9pm on Sunday evening (i.e., the night before class).
- For readings to be discussed on a Wednesday, your responses are due by 9pm on Tuesday evening (again, the night before class).
- Late responses will not be accepted (Google Forms uses a timestamp)

Grading of reading responses:
Each reading response will be worth 100 points. To receive credit, you must complete all of the sections (responses to questions, reflection on passage and your two questions). If you thoughtfully engage with the questions, write a sufficiently thorough reflection and pose two questions that ask students to engage with the text (but can’t simply be answered by repeating what’s in the text), you should do well. Although these responses are not meant to be essays, at a minimum, please write clearly and in complete sentences. Major points may also be deducted for not covering each of the main topics (-25); not writing enough (-25); or if it appears that you simply didn’t put in much effort (-25). You may also lose points for overall poor writing. Please proofread before submitting.

Note: These responses are intended to help you to critically engage with the material for the class, rather than read passively. At first, writing answers to the questions may feel awkward or uncertain, but it will get easier as the course progresses. Most importantly, your reflections and questions will help us to have a more engaged discussion in class.

*Further instructions for responding to the reading response questions are posted under the “Pages” tab in Canvas. Please read them – they will help you understand what is expected.
Attendance (10%):

Class attendance is mandatory*. However, you may miss two classes for any reason without penalty (this includes illness, emergencies, personal days, etc) so long as you email to let me know, preferably before class, but by no later than one hour after class has ended; otherwise, it will count as an unexcused absence. Beyond the first two, however, your COURSE GRADE will be reduced by 5% per absence regardless of the reason, even if you are sick. So, please use your absences sparingly. For example, if you skip classes early on just because you don’t feel like coming and then become sick later in the course, you will have already used up your excused absences. If there are extraordinary circumstances that will result in your missing more than the 2 classes (such a serious/chronic illness, death in the family, etc), please contact me as soon as possible. Some documentation may be required in these cases. You may lose up to 15% of your course grade for five or more total absences. You are always welcome to come speak with me regarding struggles with attendance or participation, whatever the reason, but I must maintain the same attendance standards for everyone in the class, with the exception of some extraordinary life event. If you have questions about this policy, please ask.

*At the beginning of class, please sign the attendance sheet at the front. Please do not sign in friends or colleagues who miss class. This will result in grade deductions for both participants and possible disciplinary action. My apologies for even bringing it up, but it has happened in the past☺

Participation (5%):

In addition to attending class, you are expected to be an active participant in class. Early on, the course will contain more lecture; however, as we move through the course, we will have more and more discussion. You are encouraged to ask questions, answer questions I will pose, and respond to points/arguments your colleagues make. It looks like there will be a fairly small number of people in the course, so your voices are all the more important to make this an engaging conversation. I will take note of folks who are generally disengaged (obviously, there will be days when you may not feel like talking and that’s okay, but your participation score will reflect your overall level of engagement in class discussions).

Midterm Essay (20%):

You will be asked to write a midterm essay of approximately 5-6 pages drawing on some themes covered in the course up to this point in the course. Instructions for the essay will be made available approximately one week before the due date. You will upload your papers to Canvas by 5pm on Saturday, February 13th.

Take-home essay final (30%):

There will be a take-home final essay exam that will require you to integrate some of the material covered throughout the quarter. The essay prompt(s) will be distributed via Canvas on Tuesday MAR 8th by noon. Your essays will be due by Tuesday, MAR 15th by noon on Canvas. Further details will be provided in class but you should plan for approximately 10 pages of writing.
Policy on Late Papers (both Midterm and Final Essays):

Late papers will receive a whole letter grade deduction per 24-hour period after the due date/time. Papers more than 48 hours late will NOT be accepted under any circumstances. If your paper will be late (any amount of time past the initial deadline for any reason, please contact me ahead of time).

Course Mechanics and Policies

Please read the following information carefully. It is your responsibility to know the following details about the course. If you have questions about this information or other information not presented here, please contact me.

Course Title/Number:
Gender Studies 332 and Sociology 376 are the same course. There are no differences in assignments, grading or anything else.

Canvas:
This course will use the “Canvas” course management system.
• I will regularly send announcements to the class via Canvas, so be sure to turn on your email notifications so that you receive updated information about the course (To do so, go to “Settings”, then “Notification” and select “ASAP” under “Announcement”). Be sure you link to an email address that you check regularly.
• Please do not use Canvas to send out mass emails to the rest of the class. If you have an important announcement, please send me an individual email and we can discuss whether it is relevant for the entire class.
• All course readings will be posted as pdfs on Canvas under “Files” and arranged by class/date.

Classroom Etiquette/Respect:
• Please arrive to class on time. In the event that you are late, please enter the classroom quietly while minimizing disruption to other students.
• Please silence your cell phones and other devices – both sound and if possible, vibration – to avoid distracting other people.
• In-class use of electronic devices like laptops and tablets should only be used for class-related purposes, not checking Facebook, trading stocks, or auctioning old articles of clothing or bicycle parts on Ebay.
• Please treat one another and me ☺️ with respect. This is a course about sexuality and HIV, gender and race, marginalization, stigma and so on. If disagreements arise during the course of discussion (with me or with other students), please first attempt to listen and understand the other person’s point of view and then express your own view in a way that facilitates understanding rather than forecloses it. This means listening to yourself as you speak so as to take note of the way in which you are using language and how it may affect other people around you.
Changes to the Syllabus:
- I may decide to make changes to the syllabus from time to time. I will always provide you with ample notice of any changes via an announcement on Canvas. Changes might include swapping out a reading for a different one, eliminating a reading, or adjusting the timing of readings if we get behind.
- Changes to due dates for written assignments like the Midterm or Final are unlikely. However, if I do make changes, you would have the same amount of time or more to complete the assignment, not less.

Students with Disabilities:
- Students with a documented disability who need accommodations should contact the Office for Services for Students with Disabilities (847-467-5530).
- Students with disabilities should also speak with me during the first week of class (all discussions will remain confidential).

Audio/Video Recordings:
- Audio or video recordings of the lectures are NOT allowed without the express permission of the instructor.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism:
- Violations of academic integrity include plagiarism (see below), cheating, using another person’s work as if it were your own, covering for another student’s dishonesty and so on. You should become familiar with Northwestern University’s policy: http://www.northwestern.edu/provost/policies/academic-integrity/index.html
- Plagiarism: Examples of plagiarism include but are not limited to: directly copying work written by another person without an appropriate citation; modifying a few words written by someone else, but otherwise presenting another person’s ideas as if they were your own without appropriate citations; using information from the internet without appropriate citation even if that information has no identifiable author (such as information from a Wikipedia page). If you have any questions about what constitutes plagiarism and how to appropriately cite other people’s work, please come speak with me.
- Reporting plagiarism or violations of academic integrity: Instructors at Weinberg College at Northwestern are required to report any suspected violations of policies related to academic integrity to Dean Mark Sheldon’s office. The Dean will then follow up to assess whether there has in fact been a violation and what the appropriate response might be. See http://www.weinberg.northwestern.edu/handbook/integrity/ for further information.
Schedule of Readings and Assignments:

MON, JAN 4: INTRODUCTION (Class 1)


PART I: THE EARLY YEARS OF HIV/AIDS: RISK CATEGORIES, REPRESENTATIONS AND RESPONSE

WED, JAN 6: Scientific Knowledge and Risk Categorization (Class 2)


WEEK 2

*MON, JAN 11: Homosexuality, Reactions to AIDS epidemic and HIV-stigma (Class 3)

*NOTE – REQUIRED ASSIGNMENT: Everyone must submit first reading response via Google Form to either the Seidman or Herek article BY 9PM ON SUNDAY, JAN 10 (the eve before class).


*(Note: Read pp. 107-130 only)

Recommended reading:

WED, JAN 13: Early community responses aimed at preventing AIDS (Class 4)


* See Supplement for Brier reading for list of acronyms (the same file folder)
WEEK 3

*MON, JAN 18: MLK JR DAY – NO CLASS

*Please read ahead for Wednesday

WED, JAN 21: Media and Scientific Representations of AIDS: Understanding the Functions and Limitations of Risk Groups (Class 5)


WEEK 4

MON, JAN 25: Intersections of race, gender and sexuality: HIV/AIDS “in Africa” (Class 6)


Note: Reading the Lewis piece BEFORE the Patton piece will likely help you better understand Patton’s perspective (despite the gap in publication dates☺)

WED, JAN 27: Intersections of race, gender, sexuality and HIV/AIDS in the U.S. (Class 7)


Recommended:


PART II: STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE: ACCESS TO TREATMENT

WEEK 5

*MON, FEB 1: The Politics of Treatment Activism in the U.S. (Class 8)


Begin In-Class Film: How to Survive a Plague

*DEADLINE REMINDER: By Monday, FEB 1, you must have completed at least 3 of the 7 required reading responses (due by Sunday, Jan 31st at 9PM)

WED, FEB 3: The Politics of Treatment Activism in the U.S. (Class 9)


Finish In-Class Film: How to Survive a Plague

WEEK 6

MON, FEB 8: Intersections of Gender, Race, Sexuality, Class and Treatment Activism (Class 10)

**In class discussion of film in relation to the following articles**


WED, FEB 10: Treatment Access in South Africa and Lasting Legacies of Stereotypes (Class 11)

**Read one or the other of**: 


Recommended:


**MIDTERMS DUE SATURDAY FEB 13 BY 5PM**

**PART III: HIV-PREVENTION, SEXUAL PRACTICES AND INTIMACIES**

**WEEK 7**

**MON, FEB 15: Negotiating ‘safer sex’ (Class 12)**


Recommended:


**WED, FEB 17: Managing HIV-risk: HIV-testing, treatment and sexual practice (Class 13)**


MON, FEB 22: Trust, sex and condom use (Class 14)


WED, FEB 24: Criminalization of people with HIV (Class 15)


Recommended:

WEEK 9

MON, FEB 29: Barebacking subcultures? (Class 16)


*Alternative – may assign following articles instead – stay tuned:


WED, MAR 2: New frontiers in HIV-prevention I (Class 17)


Recommended:


*WEEK 10*

**MON, MAR 7: New frontiers II: Pre-exposure prophylaxis for HIV-prevention (Class 18)**

Murphy, Tim. 2014. "Sex without Fear." in *New York Magazine*.


*If doing a reading response for this class, you must respond to Dean, not Murphy.*

**READING PERIOD**

**TUES, MAR 8:**

**Take-home FINAL ESSAY assignment posted on Canvas BY NOON**

**TUES, MAR 15:**

**FINAL ESSAYS DUE BY 12PM (NOON)**