

Dana Forum: Sex, Ethics, and Pleasure Politics

Dr. Francesca Coppa
coppa@muhlenberg.edu, CA 276, X3275

Tuesday 6 - 8 PM (5:45 for food)
Office Hours: Tuesday 5 – 6 & by appt.

The Dana Forum is a senior year experience designed to provide an opportunity for Dana scholars to engage in a shared interdisciplinary dialogue, enriching both your own education and the intellectual climate on campus. Each year the Forum helps Dana senior develop and execute collaborative research projects centered on issues of public interest that are tied to the Center for Ethics annual theme. This year the theme is "Sex, Ethics, and Pleasure Politics." In the fall, we will study interdisciplinary approaches to sexual activity and its cultural and political representations, and you will begin development of your research projects. The research component of the Dana Forum will be completed in the Spring semester and presented to the campus community in April. (Adapted from information at <http://www.muhlenberg.edu/main/academics/dana-scholars/>)

Sex, Ethics, and Pleasure Politics theme: Although sexual activity is part of socialization and identity formation, sexual behavior is generally considered a private matter, and is seldom examined critically in the public sphere. Universities are no exception; college students - regardless of whether they choose to have sex - are immersed in a campus culture in which 'private' sexual beliefs and behaviors shape the 'public' undergraduate social experience, and yet the uncritical attitudes that shape these beliefs and behaviors are rarely interrogated or considered within an intellectual or ethical frame. The 2013-2014 Center for Ethics theme, "Sex, Ethics, and Pleasure Politics" will attempt to create an ethical conversation centered on interpersonal sexual behavior as well as the political, scientific, religious, aesthetic, and legal forces that shape the permissibility and impermissibility of sexual acts. Directed by Professors Jeremy Teissere and Cathy Ouellette.

Center for Ethics Events: Our class time overlaps with some of the planned Center for Ethics events; in those cases, we will often have an hour of class that reflects the speaker's topic and then proceed to the event. These events are required and are part of class material; if you have a conflict, please see me in advance. We will discuss the speakers during dinner the following class.

Let's Talk About Sex, Baby (*someone* had to say it, right? It's like a law?) Sex is a famously difficult subject to talk about at *all*, let alone honestly, and so we will all be trying to figure out how to speak appropriately: how to say things that are smart and provocative and interesting and honest while still being respectful of others and also taking into account our differences (such as gender, power, age, authenticity, religion, culture, ethnicity, etc.) Sex is the ultimate "your mileage may vary" subject; it is also for many a deeply personal subject, and one that we have not been encouraged to discuss in public space. Sex – and this is one of the reasons for this course – tends to present itself in the false binary of "normal" or "freakish," when it's more individualistic and less commodified than many cultural activities (which doesn't mean that that it *is* individual or uncommodified!)

So participation in this course is not without challenge. *But I have confidence in us.* We are all grownups and we are all smart. I would like us: to give each other the benefit of the doubt; to allow ourselves space to try out ideas and write shitty first drafts and change our minds; to create a supportive classroom where we can take the risks we need to take to talk about things that may make us vulnerable or uncomfortable. Be respectful. Use good judgment. While you should never feel

pressured to discuss something personal, personal stories might well come up; please be worthy of your classmates' (and my) trust in you. We can do this; it's going to be great.

Triggers & Warnings. Trigger warnings are "designed to prevent people who may have severe and damaging emotional responses" (i.e. post-traumatic flashbacks or self-harming urges) to certain subjects (commonly including violence, rape, and sexual assault.) This course contains sexual themes, and features some explicit textual and visual sexual material (marked with *). We will primarily be engaging this material in an intellectual way. That being said, in a feminist space we know that both men and women may have been victims of sexual assault or might find particular subjects triggering, so I will try to be clear about the material so that you can judge what you can and can't handle. I should note that in talking about triggers I am talking about something beyond dislike, discomfort, or embarrassment, but only you can make that decision.

Coursework: Unlike a regular course or seminar, the Forum is not designed to teach you information on which you will be tested, or help you master a particular, predetermined body of knowledge. Rather, our goal is to work together to explore this very rich and complex theme, and consider how a range of disciplinary perspectives in the sciences, social sciences and humanities, each bring something important to the conversation. Please note that on some nights another faculty member will be joining us as a guest discussion leader to change our perspective.

I like assigning a lot of readings for context, and I will ask you to choose one that was of interest and write a 1-2 page freewrite/discussion paper each week. I also provide additional readings in case you want to investigate a topic in more depth for your research project (and I have a boatload of readings that I haven't put up on Blackboard, so if you're interested in something: please ask!)

Independent Projects: As the fall semester progresses, you will form groups of three or four to develop projects - which will be written during the spring semester - that consider some aspect of Sex, Ethics, and Pleasure Politics. By the end of the semester, each group will have developed a project proposal with a preliminary bibliography, which will be presented to the rest of the Forum students during one of the last three sessions of the semester. Each group will also need to select a faculty mentor to help guide the project during the spring semester.

There are no rules with regard to what your topics should be, how you should approach your projects, or what research methodologies you should employ. If our work together is successful, our shared conversation will serve as inspiration for research ideas that none of us can predict.

Requirements and evaluation

Grades for the Forum will be determined on the basis of the components described below:

Attendance and participation (Fall course)	20%
Written reflections (Fall)	15%
Group Research: Preliminary Proposals (Fall)	10%
Group proposal presentation (Fall course)	5%
Final Project and Presentation (Spring)	40%
Peer Evaluations (Fall and Spring)	10%

Group Research: Preliminary Proposals: these should be 5-10 pages and formatted as follows:

Cover page, including: Project Title, Group Members, Faculty Mentor, & Abstract

Background: Review the relevant prior work for your project

Question/Objectives: Develop your specific projects questions and objectives.

Approach/Methodology: What exactly will you do? Please be specific.

Significance: What is the value of this work/What will be the novel contribution?

Expertise of Group & Faculty Mentor: What does each bring to the project?

Literature Cited

Group Proposal Presentations will be on 11/19, 11/26 & 12/3. Each group will give a 10 minute presentation of its proposal organized as above to the class, faculty mentor, and Dana faculty.

Self & Peer Evaluation form: Every student will submit a self & peer evaluation form by 12/3.

Disabilities: Students who require accommodations must first contact Academic Support Services or the Counseling Center. Please do this as soon as possible.

ABC: All requirements are to be performed under the bounds of the Academic Behavior Code.

SCHEDULE OF CLASSES

TUES, AUG 27 **Introduction:** "Is there still a line? If so, where is it?"
Consent issue 1: TED talk: "Sex needs a new metaphor. Here's one..."
Consent issue 2: Warnings vs. advertising in fanfiction tags.

TUES SEPT 3 **Sex in America:** aka, "Boy, The Science Is Lousy!" (Guest: Jeremy Teissere)
Note: Class will be held in Seegers 111. For Dinner please go through the Cafeteria and bring your dinner into Seegers 111. If you do not have a dining plan we will pay, just ask for the Dana Forum card and put your name down as a guest.

Required:

Michael et. al, *Sex in America* (Warner: 1995) (Ch. 1, 2)
Coyne, Jerry. "Evolutionary Science for the Masses"

Additional:

National Survey of Sexual Health and Behavior (NSSHB) <http://www.nationalsexstudy.indiana.edu/>
Kinsey data: <http://www.iub.edu/~kinsey/resources/FAQ.html>
Ogi and Sai, *A Billion Wicked Thoughts* (please note: this is what NOT to do.)

TUES SEPT 10 **"How Should We Talk About Sex at Muhlenberg?"** (links on Blackboard)
DINNER @ 6 PM TBA, PANEL @ 7:30, Miller Forum, Moyer

TUES SEPT 17 **Hooking Up**

Required:

Armstrong, Hamilton, & England, "Is Hooking Up Bad For Young Women?" *Contexts*, Aug Vol 9, #3, 2010, 22-27

Smiler, Andrew. *Challenging Casanova* (Jossey-Bass, 2012) (excerpts)

Wade and Heldman, "Hooking Up and Opting Out: What Students Learn About Sex in their First Year of College," in *Sex for Life: From Virginity to Viagra, How Sexuality Changes Throughout our*

Lives, edited by J. DeLamater & L. Carpenter, 2012

Additional:

Wade, Lisa. "Hookup Culture: College kids can handle it" (LA Times May 30, 2013)

Clark-Flory, Tracy. "Expert: Guys don't want casual sex!" (Salon)

Epstein, Calzo, Smiler, Ward. "Anything From Making Out to Having Sex": Men's Negotiations of Hooking Up and Friends With Benefits Scripts, *Journal of Sex Research*, 46(5) 2009

Smiler, Andrew P. "I wanted to get to know her better": Adolescent boys' dating motives, masculinity ideology, and sexual behavior.

TUES SEPT 24 **Asexuality and Kink**

Required:

Asexual Visibility and Education Network – asexuality.org

AVEN wiki: http://www.asexuality.org/wiki/index.php?title=Main_Page

<http://asexual-fandom.dreamwidth.org/9014.html>

Paglia, Camille. "Scholars in Bondage," (Chronicle of Higher Education, May 20, 2013)

*Nin, Anais. "Delta of Venus," (excerpt)

Brancher, "not beautiful," (Batman fanfic)

Additional:

"An Introduction to The Wrong Books," by Kestrell (links to *Fanny Hill*, *The Pearl* and other erotica)

*James, E.L. *50 Shades of Gray* (UK draft)

*Shamoon, Deborah, "Office Sluts and Rebel Flowers: the Pleasures of Japanese Pornographic Comics for Women"

TUES OCT 1 **Sex And The Visual Arts** (Guest: Margo Hobbs)

Required:

Corinne, Tee. "Imagining Sex into Reality."

TUES OCT 8 **Porn and the Sex Wars**

Required:

Ross, Karen. "Sexy Media: The Pornographication of Popular Culture or Just A Bit Of Slap and Tickle" in *Gendered Media* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013)

**Caught Looking*, Feminist Anticensorship Task Force (F.A.C.T.)

McRobbie, Angela. Pornographic Permutations. (*The Communication Review*, 11: 225–236, 2008)

Hunter, Nan. "Contextualizing the Sexuality Debates: A Chronology 1966-2005" in *Sex Wars: 10th anniversary edition* (Routledge 2006)

Additional Materials:

Strossen, Nadine. "Sex Panic and the Feminist Split," *Defending Pornography* (1996)

Rubin, Gayle. "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality"

Overall, Christine. " What's Wrong with Prostitution? Evaluating Sex Work" *Signs* (1992)

Murphy and Venkatesh, *Vice Careers: The Changing Contours of Sex Work in New York City* (*Qualitative Sociology*, 29: 129-54. 2006)

TUES OCT 15 FALL BREAK – CLASS CANCELLED

TUES OCT 22 **"Sex and Literature"** (Guest: Jim Bloom)
GROUPS DUE BY EMAIL.

Required:

McCarthy, Mary, "The Man in the Brooks Brother's Shirt"
Munro, Alice, "Chance"

TUES OCT 29 **Dorothy Roberts: Sex, Power, Taboo** (links on Blackboard: TBA)
CLASS @ 6 PM, TALK@ 7PM, Seeger's Union Event Space

Required:

Wade, Lisa. "Learning from "Female Genital Mutilation": Lessons from 30 Years of Academic Discourse," *Ethnicities* 2012 12: 26

TUES NOV 5 **Anne Fausto-Sterling Sex/Gender: Biology** (links on Blackboard: TBA)
CLASS@6PM, TALK @ 7:30, Miller Forum, Moyer

TUES NOV 12 **E. Patrick Johnson – Sex, Race, Performance** (links on Blackboard: TBA)
CLASS@ 6PM, TALK @ 7:30 in Empie

TUES NOV 19 Group Proposal Presentations
PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS DUE

TUES NOV 26 Group Proposal Presentations / Thanksgiving

TUES DEC 3 Group Proposal Presentations

SPRING CENTER FOR ETHICS TALKS INCLUDE:

MON JAN 27 Linda Williams
Film Studies/history of porn and melodrama

TUES FEB 11 Kate Ranieri
Media and Communication/sexual health

FEB/MARCH Marlene Zuk
Ethnobiological approaches to Sex

MARCH/APRIL Hugh Urban
Religion, mysticism, sexuality

MARCH/APRIL Denise Brennan
Sex Tourism

ADDITIONAL TOPICS / JUST FOR STARTERS!

Sex in video games

Orgasm (why orgasm, faking orgasm, performing orgasm, filming orgasm)

Masturbation

Prostitution, Sex Work, and Performance

Teenage Sexuality

Bisexuality

Child Rearing and Reproduction

Sex and FMRI (Functional magnetic resonance imaging)

History of sexual surveys

Sex and big data

Sexual health

Sexuality across cultures

Transsexuality or Intersexuality

Sex Tourism

Literary Erotica / Reading as Sex, Sex as Reading

Sex and disability / Sexual Surrogacy