




**GENDERST700: Theorizing Gender and Social Justice**  
*Sex & Sexuality*  
**Term: Fall 2023**

Instructor: Dr. Allauren Samantha Forbes  
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Classroom:   
Meetings:   
Office:   
Office hours: By appointment only

### Course Description

Sex and sexuality are deeply important to many folks in a host of ways. For some, sex and sexuality are a means of affirming who they are, who they love, and how they connect to others and themselves. Others seek to weaponize sex and sexuality for their own political purposes. This course will be a deep-dive into contemporary philosophical discourses on the nature of sex, sexuality, and some of the moral and political implications thereof, including entitlement, power, and porn. In so doing, and throughout the course, we will adopt an intersectional lens, considering the ways that gender, race, class, disability, and many other ways of living and experiencing the world shape and undermine the concepts and theories at hand.

### Course Learning Outcomes

- Critically analyze the arguments of philosophers of sex and sexuality
- Discuss these theories in a respectful, engaging, and constructive way;
- Reflect on one's own social location and knowledge practices;
- Construct clear and persuasive arguments about topics in the philosophy of sex and sexuality;
- Produce a conference-length philosophy paper.

### Textbooks, Materials, & Fees

Required texts

- *The Routledge Handbook of Sex and Sexuality* (ebook ONLY)
- *The Right to Sex*, Amia Srinivasan

All other readings will be provided as pdf or url in keeping with McMaster's copyright policy.

### Method of Assessment

Your grade in this course will be determined by the following assignments:

1. **Epistemic Community Membership (35%)**
  - a. **Course citizenship and weekly engagement (20%)**
    - i. **Weekly engagement (10%)**

Here, I will assess the quality of your engagement with the material, your peers, and with me. Are you a charitable interpreter, engaging interlocutor, friendly participant? Do you bring questions to class, passages of interest, ideas and thoughts and reflections to share? Please note that though this is akin to an attendance and participation grade, I am looking for you

to show up in a literal *and* metaphorical sense; attendance is not sufficient, but I do not require mastery of the material, but rather effort to engage, even if engagement sometimes means being very confused. That's fine! We're here to work through things together. Lean on your peers (and me) as is necessary.

**ii. Course citizenship via self-assessment (10%)**

At the end of the semester, you will write a brief, 500-word self-assessment, structured loosely around some prompts I will provide, assessing whether you were, in fact, a good course citizen in the ways noted above and given the parameters we set in class at the beginning of the semester. On the assumption that I agree with your grade/justification, I will assign the grade you recommend for this portion of your final grade. Should there be some disagreement, I will provide a careful and reasoned explanation.

**b. Presentation (10%)**

Each student will be responsible for presenting & leading discussion around one assigned reading. You will be assessed for the quality of explanation and discussion in this portion of the class. Please feel free to meet with me in advance to chat through how you're thinking about things, if you have any questions/concerns, etc.

**c. Peer review (5%)**

Each student will give a very brief, very preliminary sketch of what they're thinking to write in their term paper (assessed as part of the Term Paper assignment), and each presenter will have an assigned commentator who will take careful notes and will provide a thoughtful, written commentary (via email and cc-ing me) to the person to whom they've been assigned. The focus here should be on helping your peers develop their view, consider possible solutions or problems – we are collaborators, not critics.

**2. Podcast Assignment (20%)**

In the spirit of cooperative inquiry, and with the knowledge that conversations are often some of the most interesting and intellectually productive tools at our disposal, you will work in groups to produce a podcast (which is really just a record of a conversation you've had) about some topic, theme, etc. related to the course material. This is much less structured than a paper, but that is precisely the point: there are many ways to make a point, and many ways to engage in collaborative inquiry. This is but one. We will talk more about the mechanics of this assignment around the break.

**3. Term Paper (45% = 40% paper + 5% presentation)**

You will write a conference-length paper offering an interesting and sophisticated argument. Hopefully, you will also submit this to a conference (and be accepted as a presenter). These papers are usually about 4000 words, which sounds a lot easier than it is. Conferences and writing conference papers is a crucially important skill in academia, and even if this isn't your main interest, conferences offer a wonderful social and intellectual experience. When you've settled on a broad topic, please contact me to set a meeting so that we can refine your question and source any further secondary literature relevant.

It is possible that such a final project will not be useful for you for various disciplinary reasons/norms. In that case, we should meet to discuss a reasonable alternative – a creative project, some other kinds of literary output, etc. – so that you are getting the most out of this course.

## Policy on Missed Work, Extensions, and Late Penalties

If you need an extension, request one from Dr. Forbes (via email) at least 24 hours in advance of the deadline.

Late penalties:

Everyone receives a 24-hour flexible deadline on all assignments without needing to email for an extension.

Otherwise – that is, when no extension has been obtained in writing – every 24 hrs after the flexible deadline you will lose 5% off the top of the final grade of the paper. So, if you turn in a paper that scores an 83% two days late, it becomes a 73% paper. There is no upper limit on this penalty.

*Missed work:*

Any work which does not have an extension or accommodation obtained in writing (via email)/SAS-approved accommodation, and which remains unsubmitted more than 5 calendar days after the deadline, will receive a zero.

## Other Course Information

*Absences*

If you are sick, **do not come to class**. Email me saying that you are ill and cannot attend. There is no need to provide details or documentation on this matter. If your absence impedes your ability to turn work in on time, please email Dr. Forbes to discuss an alternate timeline or submit an MSAF for an automatic seven-day extension.

*Behaviour*

It is deeply important that we maintain an attitude of respect for one another and for the subjects we cover in this class, especially because many of them are quite personal/sensitive/important. Philosophy is, at its core, a practice of critical thinking. This often consists in making arguments and responding to one's interlocutors in ways that interrogate their positions and claims; we will consider reasons for and against views in a way that incorporates an underlying commitment to trust, empathy, and cooperative inquiry. Throughout our discussions of some sensitive issues and concerns, we will maintain an attitude of respect even – especially – when we disagree with the views at hand. We will discuss specific practices of class conduct in the first class.

*Email*

I will communicate with you via email and Avenue Announcement, particularly if something changes in the course. Please ensure that you are receiving these notifications. My general policy is to respond to emails within 48 hours of receiving them, not including weekends; however, I will not discuss grades over email, and would prefer that longer questions about assignments are addressed in office hours. Please check the syllabus and the (forthcoming) detailed instructions on assignments, etc. before emailing me about them.

*Grades*

I am committed to a fair and unbiased grading process. As such, all assignments must be submitted with no identifying information other than your student number. This allows the teaching team to grade anonymously. If you have concerns about this process, please contact me and we will discuss possible solutions. If you are unsatisfied with your grade and would like to appeal it, the process is as

follows. Between 24 and 72 hours after the grades are posted, explain in writing – in a way that responds to every single comment – how you think the grade/comments are inappropriate for your assignment. I promise to consider these appeals and, if the appeal is accepted, to re-examine your assignment. Please note, however, that a successful request for regrading can result in your mark going up or down.

### *Accessibility and Support Services*

I want all of you to succeed and flourish philosophically. There are, of course, many ways to learn; I will strive to adapt to your needs, but this means that you must tell me how you learn best. Please feel free to contact me via email or in office hours to let me know what works for you.

Students with disabilities or relevant diagnoses are strongly encouraged to make use of services here at the University. If you require any accommodations in light of any diagnoses or disabilities, please contact Student Accessibility Services. You do not need to disclose any details of any of these matters with me; once you've been in contact with SAS, we will only discuss how to accommodate your needs given practical details of the class.

### *Turnitin*

In this course we will be using a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal plagiarism. Students who do not wish to submit their work to Turnitin.com must still submit a copy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity)

## **Academic Integrity**

You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behaviour in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty is to knowingly act or fail to act in a way that results or could result in unearned academic credit or advantage. This behaviour can result in serious consequences, e.g. the grade of zero on an assignment, loss of credit with a notation on the transcript (notation reads: "Grade of F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university. For information on the various types of academic dishonesty please refer to the Academic Integrity Policy, located at <https://secretariat.mcmaster.ca/university-policies-procedures-guidelines/>

The following illustrates only three forms of academic dishonesty:

- plagiarism, e.g. the submission of work that is not one's own or for which other credit has been obtained.
- improper collaboration in group work.
- copying or using unauthorized aids in tests and examinations.

## **Authenticity / Plagiarism Detection**

Some courses may use a web-based service (Turnitin.com) to reveal authenticity and ownership of student submitted work. For courses using such software, students will be expected to submit their work electronically either directly to Turnitin.com or via Avenue to Learn (A2L) plagiarism detection (a service supported by Turnitin.com) so it can be checked for academic dishonesty.

Students who do not wish to submit their work through A2L and/or Turnitin.com must still submit an electronic and/or hardcopy to the instructor. No penalty will be assigned to a student who does not submit work to Turnitin.com or A2L. All submitted work is subject to normal verification that standards of academic integrity have been upheld (e.g., on-line search, other software, etc.). To see the Turnitin.com Policy, please go to [www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

## **Courses with an On-Line Element**

Some courses use on-line elements (e.g. e-mail, Avenue to Learn (A2L), LearnLink, web pages, capa, Moodle, ThinkingCap, etc.). Students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of a course using these elements, private information such as first and last names, user names for the McMaster e-mail accounts, and program affiliation may become apparent to all other students in the same course. The available information is dependent on the technology used. Continuation in a course that uses on-line elements will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

## **Online Proctoring**

Some courses may use online proctoring software for tests and exams. This software may require students to turn on their video camera, present identification, monitor and record their computer activities, and/or lockdown their browser during tests or exams. This software may be required to be installed before the exam begins.

## **Conduct Expectations**

As a McMaster student, you have the right to experience, and the responsibility to demonstrate, respectful and dignified interactions within all of our living, learning and working communities. These expectations are described in the Code of Student Rights & Responsibilities (the "Code"). All students share the responsibility of maintaining a positive environment for the academic and personal growth of all McMaster community members, whether in person or online.

It is essential that students be mindful of their interactions online, as the Code remains in effect in virtual learning environments. The Code applies to any interactions that adversely affect, disrupt, or interfere with reasonable participation in University activities. Student disruptions or behaviours that interfere with university functions on online platforms (e.g. use of Avenue 2 Learn, WebEx or Zoom for delivery), will be taken very seriously and will be investigated. Outcomes may include restriction or removal of the involved students' access to these platforms.

## **Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities**

Students with disabilities who require academic accommodation must contact Student Accessibility Services (SAS) at 905-525-9140 ext. 28652 or [sas@mcmaster.ca](mailto:sas@mcmaster.ca) e-mail to make arrangements with a

Program Coordinator. For further information, consult McMaster University's Academic Accommodation of Students with Disabilities policy.

### **Email correspondence policy**

It is the policy of the Faculty of Humanities that all email communication sent from students to instructors (including TAs), and from students to staff, must originate from each student's own McMaster University email account. This policy protects confidentiality and confirms the identity of the student. Instructors will delete emails that do not originate from a McMaster email account.

### **Modification of course outlines**

The University reserves the right to change dates and/or deadlines etc. for any or all courses in the case of an emergency situation or labour disruption or civil unrest/disobedience, etc. If a modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. Any significant changes should be made in consultation with the Department Chair.

### **Request for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF)**

In the event of an absence for medical or other reasons, students should review and follow the Academic Regulation in the Undergraduate Calendar "Requests for Relief for Missed Academic Term Work".

### **Academic Accommodation for Religious, Indigenous and Spiritual Observances (RISO)**

Students requiring academic accommodation based on religious, indigenous or spiritual observances should follow the procedures set out in the RISO policy. Students should submit their request to their Faculty Office normally within 10 working days of the beginning of term in which they anticipate a need for accommodation or to the Registrar's Office prior to their examinations. Students should also contact their instructors as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements for classes, assignments, and tests.

### **Copyright and Recording**

Students are advised that lectures, demonstrations, performances, and any other course material provided by an instructor include copyright protected works. The Copyright Act and copyright law protect every original literary, dramatic, musical and artistic work, including lectures by University instructors.

The recording of lectures, tutorials, or other methods of instruction may occur during a course. Recording may be done by either the instructor for the purpose of authorized distribution, or by a student for the purpose of personal study. Students should be aware that their voice and/or image

may be recorded by others during the class. Please speak with the instructor if this is a concern for you.

## Extreme Circumstances

The University reserves the right to change the dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances (e.g., severe weather, labour disruptions, etc.). Changes will be communicated through regular McMaster communication channels, such as McMaster Daily News, A2L and/or McMaster email.

## Schedule and Readings

@ indicates it is in RHSS

\* indicates it is in TRTS

Week 1: What is sex?

- Gupta, “What is a Sexual Act?” @
- McArthur, “The Concept and Significance of Virginity” @

Week 2: What is sexuality?

- Dembroff, “What is Sexual Orientation?”
- Díaz-Léon, “Sexual Orientation, Sexual Desires, and Choice” @

Week 3: What is sexuality?

- Andler, “Queer and Straight”@
- Eaton and Szustak, “Asexuality”@

Week 4: Sexual autonomy

- McDonald, “Flirting”@
- Kukla, “That’s What She Said”

Week 5: Sexual autonomy

- Brisson, “Beyond Consent”@
- Shakespeare, “Sex and Disability”@

Week 6: Regulating sexual relationships

- Macedo and de Marneffe, “Monogamy: Government Policy”@
- Watson, “Plural Marriage and Equality”@

Week 7: Pathologizing sex and sexuality

- Dankle, “The Eugenic Logic of Sexual Normality”@
- Thomason, “Religion and sexual shame”@

Week 8: Sex and race

- Zheng, “Why Yellow Fever Isn’t Flattering”
- Halwani, “Racial Sexual Desires”

Week 9: Desire

- Barn, “The Ethics and Politics of Sexual Preference”@

- Garcia, “BDSM”@
- Nyholm, “The Ethics of Humanoid Sex Robots”@

Week 10: *The Right to Sex*

- Srinivasan, “The Conspiracy Against Men”\*
- Srinivasan, “Talking to My Students About Porn”\*

Week 11: *The Right to Sex*

- Srinivasan, “The Right to Sex”\*
- Srinivasan, “On Not Sleeping with Your Students”\*

Week 12: *The Right to Sex*

- Srinivasan, “Sex, Carceralism, Capitalism”\*
- Presentations