Course time and location: MR3:30 and T4:30; JHE-264

**Professor:**  
Dr. J. M. Ostovich  
Email: jmostovich@mcmaster.ca  
Phone: *Do not call me*; I can never remember the contents of a phone discussion; thus any promises I make you over the phone are almost certainly going to be forgotten! and, once forgotten, null and void.  
Office: PC-415A  
Office hours: M 1-2:30; monitor news section of website for cancellations, changes, and extra hours.

**Teaching Assistants:**  
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**Please note:** This syllabus – including scheduling, topic order, topics themselves, and assessment strategy – is subject to change if circumstances warrant (e.g., TA loss).

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**Course Description:** The purpose of this course is to introduce you to research and theory on human sexual attitudes and behaviours. We will discuss sexuality mainly from evolutionary and social psychology perspectives. Our main topics will be: sex drive; mate choice; attraction/attractiveness; love; non-normative sexuality.

**Textbooks:**  
Recommended: Buss, D.M. *Evolution of Desire* (some copies available at Titles; easy to acquire at on-line bookstores, too). Required: *Human Sexuality Reader* (available exclusively at Titles; package contains 2 readers).

**E-mail Policy:** E-mail must originate from your designated McMaster e-mail account. Should we need to communicate with you about individual matters, the e-mail will be sent to your mcmaster.ca account. You should monitor this account regularly. E-mail sent from third-party providers (yahoo, hotmail, cogeco, sympatico, etc.) will be ignored. We have this policy for three reasons: (1) to reduce the amount of incoming spam to our accounts; (2) to ensure that we know with whom we are communicating; and (3) to teach the professional use of e-mail. Remember: E-mails to your professors are professional communications. They should include correct spelling and punctuation, should have an informative subject line, and should be polite and to the point.
**Website Policy:** This course has an “Avenue to Learn” website. You are expected to check this website with regularity for announcements, updates, discussion board postings, and other valuable information. It is your responsibility to keep up with the information provided on this site.

Use of the website’s **discussion boards** is strongly encouraged, and, in the case of non-private inquiries (e.g., questions about course content and the running of this course, but not emails reporting illness or other private matters) is preferred to email communications. I have many students and cannot possibly answer all emails. Questions asked on the discussion board allow other students with the same questions the chance to see the answer (and therefore not have to ask the question themselves). Discussion board questions also provide a learning experience for students who attempt to answer these questions themselves.

Please see the first post on each discussion board for directions on how to use the board. Posts that ignore these directions will be deleted. The professor reserves the right to ban students from the course website if they use the board inappropriately (e.g., posting mean or other inappropriate comments). This will involve lost access to slides and other important course information.

Finally, students should be aware that, when they access the electronic components of this course, 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 this course will be deemed consent to this disclosure. If you have any questions or concerns about such disclosure please discuss this with the course instructor.

**Policy re. the Recording of Lectures:** No student is permitted to record lectures in this class, unless they have CSD documentation that they require this service due to disability (e.g., dyslexia, injury). Those with permission to record lectures may not share their recording with others. Any infraction of this policy will be harshly dealt with.

Why do I have this policy? In the real world, you will not have the luxury of recording the things your boss or colleagues tell you! You must learn to listen effectively to the right things, or you will have difficulties. Note-taking gives you practice in this very important real-world skill.

**Assessment:** Your final mark will be based on four essay tests: three in-class midterms and a final exam, written during the exam period. Each test is worth 25% of your final mark.

The tests will be non-cumulative (exception: running themes in the course, such as evolutionary explanations of human sexual behavior), and will cover lecture material and assigned readings, even readings not discussed in class.

Please see the schedule, below, for assessment dates.

**Test-Taking Policy:** Tests will be run in the same way as your final examinations are run. You can bring only writing instruments, an eraser (or similar), and essentials like kleenex and bottled water to your desk. All other materials, especially electronics, must stay in your bag, at the front or side of the room in which you write your test.

Moreover, you must bring your student ID to all tests. Once seated, you must put your student card on your desk; your ID will be compared with a our most recent class list; anyone not on the class list will have their ID card confiscated, and will be asked to leave the room immediately.
**Missed Tests:** It is your responsibility to submit all excuses for missed tests to the office of the Associate Dean of your faculty within one week of the original test date. It is also your responsibility to speak with your professor as soon as possible (within hours or days after the missed test is optimal). Senate regulations for petitions for special consideration have always required that: "40. The student shall make a prompt and timely request for special consideration." No requests for special consideration will be accepted if they are received more than one month after the missed test date.

If you miss a midterm, a makeup test will be provided during class time, a week after the original test (this is to guarantee availability of students and TA’s). If you miss this make-up, then you must once again supply an excuse to your Associate Dean; otherwise, you will receive a mark of zero (0) on the midterm. If you can provide an acceptable excuse to your Associate Dean for having missed the make-up, then an alternate make-up test or assignment will be designed for you, or, depending on timing, the value of the midterm will be shifted to the other three tests (e.g., each test now worth 1/3rd of your final mark. If you miss more than one midterm (a very bad idea), you must meet with the instructor to discuss options.

**Final Grade Calculations:** Your final grade will be converted to a letter grade, according to the following scheme:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage (Grade)</th>
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<th>Percentage (Grade)</th>
<th>Percentage (Grade)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100 (A+)</td>
<td>77-79 (B+)</td>
<td>67-69 (C+)</td>
<td>57-59 (D+)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-89 (A)</td>
<td>73-76 (B)</td>
<td>63-66 (C)</td>
<td>53-56 (D)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84 (A-)</td>
<td>70-72 (B-)</td>
<td>60-62 (C-)</td>
<td>50-52 (D-)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0-49 (F)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Please Note.** The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up or down, on a individual basis, in the light of special circumstances. Students who do not pass the final, or whose final exam mark is their lowest mark in the course, will not have their final marks adjusted up under any circumstances – poor performance on a cumulative final demonstrates a lack of familiarity with course content.

**Please Note as Well.** I do not do special favours for any given student when assigning my final marks: that is, all students earning 69.2% in this course will get a C+; it is not a C+ for them but a B- for you! Your final mark is your final mark, unless a marking or mathematical error has been made. I believe that special favours to one student are unfair to the multitude of students who, for whatever reason, do not receive those same favours. Therefore, if you are concerned about your final mark, your best option is to visit with me and/or with your TA’s for guidance – well before final exam time!

**Academic Integrity:** You are expected to exhibit honesty and use ethical behavior in all aspects of the learning process. Academic credentials you earn are rooted in principles of honesty and academic integrity. 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 behavior can result in serious consequences, e.g., a grade of zero (0) on an assignment, loss of course credit with a notation on the transcript ("grade F assigned for academic dishonesty"), and/or suspension or expulsion from the university.

It is your responsibility to understand what constitutes academic dishonesty. For information on academic dishonesty, please refer to Mac’s Academic Integrity Policy, at [http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity](http://www.mcmaster.ca/academicintegrity).

**How to Do Well in This Course**

Despite the fun topic, this is a difficult course. As most of you know, I have high expectations of my students. This is because I believe that you can meet them, and believe that it’s my job to challenge you to do so.

Testing in this course is exclusively in written (essay) format, with no multiple choice. Therefore, you must be sure to target your studying and understanding of course materials such that you can write about them in an intelligent manner.
At this point in your undergraduate career, you should have been taught to think clearly about the mechanics of research. At this point, then, I expect that you have acquired the tools necessary to describe experiments and survey studies in just a few sentences. Usually, this will entail giving a brief outline of methods (“what was done?”), and brief summary of results (“what did they find?”) in sentence form (no bullet points allowed).

The ability to describe research succinctly is very important. However, we will go a step further than that in this course: I expect you to demonstrate that you understand why a given piece of research was done and what it tells us. And therefore, for any given test question, I expect you to be able to figure out which findings actually answer my question, rather than simply parrot back an entire piece of research with no indication of your understanding of how that research answers the question I have asked you.

Therefore: You might be able to describe the mechanics of a piece of research perfectly, but if you can’t pick apart the findings to answer a specific test question (i.e., focus on the “right” findings), then you will almost certainly fail that question.

In order to do well on my tests, then, you must practice summarizing experimental and survey research, and you must practice thinking about what the individual findings of this research tell us. As you study, you must continually ask yourself: “do I understand what was done here, and what was found?”; “what exactly does this particular finding mean?”; “why is this particular finding important?”; “what does the totality of research on topic X tell us?”.

I may also ask you to write a summary of any one of the readings I’ve assigned from our readings book. Thus, ask these same questions of yourself as you read the readings. Learn how to summarize an entire article in a paragraph or two.

If you would like help figuring out how to do any of this, see me or one of your TA’s (I will hold weekly office hours, once we get going; your TA’s will hold office hours before and after each midterm, and before the final, but will be available by appointment at other times). Feel free to bring your own attempts at summarizing experiments, or summarizing articles, or determining what experiments mean, or creating a narrative of a given theory’s main concepts to these appointments for our perusal.

Finally: There is little readings-related support for what we will be discussing in class. Moreover, testing focuses very heavily on lecture content. Therefore, in order to do well in this class, you must attend lecture!!!
If either type of modification becomes necessary, reasonable notice and communication with the students will be given with an explanation and the opportunity to comment on changes. It is the responsibility of the student to check their McMaster email and course websites weekly during the term and to note any changes.

**Test dates:**
- Midterm 1: Thursday 30 September
- Midterm 2: Monday 25 October
- Midterm 3: Monday 15 November
- Final Exam: To be scheduled by the Registrar

**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

**Topic 1. Defining “Sex” and Sex Drive**
- Read Cotton, “How definitive is the new sex survey?” (in Reader)
- Read Newman & Bancroft, “Should state funding of the Kinsey Institutes’ sexual research end?” (in Reader)
- Read Baumeister, Catanese, & Vohs, “Is there a gender difference in strength of sex drive? ...” (on Avenue to Learn)
- Read Simpson & Gangestad, “Individual differences in sociosexuality...” (on Avenue to Learn)
- Read Ostovich & Sabini, “How are sociosexuality, sex drive, and lifetime number of sex partners related? (on Avenue to Learn)

**Topic 2. Gender Differences in Sexuality**
Refer to Baumeister et al., Simpson & Gangestad, and Ostovich & Sabini from Topic 1

**Topic 3. The Evolutionary Approach** (note: this will last at least one month, perhaps closer to 2 months)
- Read Buss, Evolution of Desire
- Read Buss and Schmitt, “Sexual Strategies Theory...” (on Avenue to Learn)

**Topic 4. The Social Psychology Approach**
- Read Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, “What is beautiful is good” (in Reader)

**Topic 5. Love**
- Read Sternberg, “Triangulating love” (in Reader)
- Read Dutton & Aron, “Evidence for heightened sexual attraction under conditions of high anxiety” (in Reader)
- Read Narayan, “Lessons from an arranged marriage” (in Reader)
- Read Rusbult, “A longitudinal test of the investment model ...” (in Reader)

**Topic 6. Non-Normative Sexuality 1: Homosexuality**
- Read Kinsey et al., “Sexual Behavior in the Human Male” (in Reader)
- Read Rosenbluth, “Is sexual orientation a matter of choice?” (in Reader)
- Read Bower, “From exotic to erotic: Roots of sexual orientation...” (in Reader)
- Read Adams et al., “Is homophobia associated with homosexual arousal?” (in Reader)

**Topic 7. If Time: Non-Normative Sexuality 2: Paraphilias**
- Read Wise, “Fetishism – Etiology and treatment” (in Reader)