

**SYLLABUS**  
**PSYCHOLOGY 3AC3: HUMAN SEXUALITY**  
**Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour**  
**McMaster University**  
**Summer Term 2012**

Course time and location: TR 9:30am in BSB 106

**Professor:**

Dr. J. M. Ostovich

Email: Either [jmostovich@mcmaster.ca](mailto:jmostovich@mcmaster.ca) or through the *Avenue* email system (emails must originate from your mac account if the former, and your own *Avenue* account if the latter).

Phone: *Do not phone me.*

Office: PC-415A

Office hours: By appointment.

**Teaching Assistant:**

Rayna Friendly: [friendr@mcmaster.ca](mailto:friendr@mcmaster.ca)

**Please note:** This syllabus – including scheduling, topic order, topics themselves, and assessment strategy – is subject to change. You will be informed of any changes in class and on our *Avenue to Learn* website.

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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; evolutionary perspectives on mate choice; attraction/attractiveness; love; and non-normative sexuality.

**Readings.**

**Required:** You will read several articles. Some of these are listed in your syllabus; others may be announced on *Avenue to Learn* as we go.

**Recommended** for students with no evolutionary psychology background: Buss' *The Evolution of Desire* and/or Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene*. I did not requisition these from the bookstore, but they're easy to find.

**E-mail Policy:** E-mails regarding course content must originate from a valid McMaster account. Note that *Avenue* and *mcmaster.ca* cannot "talk" to one another. That is, *Avenue* will reject *mcmaster.ca* emails, and *vice versa*. Therefore, emails from *Avenue* must go to *Avenue* only, and emails from *mcmaster.ca* must go to *mcmaster.ca* only.

Email sent from third-party providers (e.g., hotmail, cogeco, google) will be ignored. McMaster has this policy for *two important reasons*: (1) to ensure that we know with whom we are communicating; and (2) to teach the

professional use of e-mail. *Remember:* E-mails to your professors are professional communications. They should (1) include correct spelling and punctuation, (2) have an *informative subject line*, and (3) be brief.

**Website Policy:** You are expected to check our course website on *Avenue to Learn* regularly 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 communication*, due to my high volume of email from 700+ students per term. Questions asked on the discussion boards 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 wish to answer these questions themselves.

Please see the top of 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 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.** Please ask before you record lectures.

**Assessment.** Your final mark will be based on one midterm and one non-cumulative final exam (*exception:* running themes in the course, such as being able to define sex drive, may be tested in both places). Tests will cover lecture materials *and* assigned readings, *even* readings not discussed in class. Tests will likely be scheduled for 1.5 hours.

The tests will combine multiple-choice and very short answers (definitions, brief explanations, fill in the blanks). Test items are designed to be challenging. They will depend on your knowledge of details (key terms, definitions, data/results of studies and experiments) and on your conceptual understanding of the materials presented in the course. Rote memorization of the material will be not enough for most students to get more than a D or C in the course.

The value of each test will depend on how you do on it: The test you do better on will be worth 55%; the test you do worse on will be worth 45%.

Please see the schedule, below, for assessment dates.

**NB:** The instructor reserves the right to alter the evaluation scheme if circumstances warrant (e.g., TA loss).

**Test-Taking Policy.** Electronics must stay in your bag, turned off. If a phone rings or vibrates during a test, you will be penalized **5%** off your *final grade in the course*. The only things allowed on your desk and/or outside of your bag during testing sessions are pens, pencils, erasers, something to eat or drink if needed, tissues if needed, and your student ID.

**Missed Tests:** Summer term is very short. I recommend that, unless you are so ill that you cannot sit up or concentrate at all, you write. If you miss the midterm or final, you will fail the course, so be sure, if you truly must miss a test, to read the instructions below carefully.

McMaster has adopted a self-report tool, the McMaster Student Absence Form (MSAF), to be used to report some (but not all) absences. Please make yourself familiar with the ins and outs of using this form by going to <http://www.mcmaster.ca/health/> and <http://www.mcmaster.ca/msaf/>.

Unfortunately, our tests are worth more than the maximum the MSAF allows (MSAF reports are for assessments worth 30% or less).

Therefore, if you miss a test, you must get a doctor's note and bring it to your Faculty or Program office. They will email me certifying your absence, and you and I will arrange a make-up. You must email me *on the day you miss the test*, unless you are hospitalized or cannot type. If you email me more than 2 days after having missed a test, you probably will get a zero on the test. This is because of the very fast time-scale of summer courses.

*If you fail to write a make-up test*, then you will fail the course. If you write only one test, it will be valued at 50% of your score on the course, which means you would have to score 100% on the one test you'd written to pass the course with a D-.

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

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

**Note:** The instructor reserves the right to adjust final marks up or down, depending on overall performance in the course. Students *who do not pass the cumulative final*, or whose final exam mark is their *lowest mark* in the course, will *not* have their mark adjusted up under any circumstances.

**Note as Well:** I do *not* do favours for one student that I do not also do the whole class. Your final mark is your final mark, unless a marking or mathematical error has been made. Special favours to one student are unfair to the multitude of students who neither ask for nor get those same favours. Therefore, if you are concerned about your final mark, it is your responsibility to visit with me or with one of your TA's, well in the advance of the final exam, for study help.

**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>.

## How to Do Well in This Course

Tests will be comprised of some mix of multiple choice (MC), fill-in-the-blanks, and brief written responses. Items will be a mixture of fact-based questions (e.g., “what was the finding?” or “what is the definition of X?” or “what was the main argument of reading Y?”), conceptual questions (e.g., “what does the finding mean?” or “why is this particular finding important?” or “how do you know that the interpretation of this finding is correct?”), and applied (e.g., “given what you know about topic A, how would a person behave in situation B?” or “Person X did Y. Why?”).

Please keep in mind that there is little readings-related support for what we will be discussing in class. Testing will focus very heavily on lecture content, but readings *will be tested*, even if I don’t explicitly address them in class. In order to do well in this class, *you must attend lecture*, and *you must do the readings!*

### IMPORTANT DATES, TOPICS, AND READINGS

**Basic structure of the course.** On page 5, you will find a list of topics (and associated readings) that I expect to cover this term. This syllabus *does not contain exact dates* other than those associated with tests. I do this in order to allow us flexibility in the timing of topics. I will keep you updated on where you should be in your readings in class, and on the announcements section of our website.

**A note on the readings.** Extra readings may be assigned as we go (it is your responsibility to keep track of added content by checking *Avenue* often). Plan carefully so that you do not find yourself “cramming” the readings at the last minute. I will not always explicitly discuss a given reading *but read and learn all readings anyway*.

**How to read journal articles.** You will be reading two types of articles.

First, you will read several review/theoretical articles. These tend not to present original research, but instead discuss and evaluate ideas. The best way to approach these is to ask yourself, about once per paragraph or section, questions such as: “what is the argument in this paragraph/section? Is it supported? Why or why not? What are the implications of this argument for the grand scheme of this topic?”.

Second, you will read several research articles. These present original research, and can be intimidating for students who are not used to reading methods and results sections. Not to worry! You should certainly read these sections, but don’t drive yourself nuts trying to memorize (or even understand) every detail. The best way to approach these is to be able to answer the following questions when you’re done reading: “why was this study done?”, “how was it done?”, “what (broadly!) was found?”, “how does this research relate to our course?”. The answers to these types of questions are *far* more important than remembering that the authors did a *t*-test or had 293 participants (these factoids aren’t important at all for the purposes of this course).

**How to find your readings.** First, look at the citation. The order of what you see is: Author. (Date). Title. *Journal name*, volume(issue), pages.

Second, find the article. There are two ways of doing this. The easier way is to configure *Google Scholar* to search our (Mac) library for links to articles, and to google the articles in *Scholar*. The alternate way is to go to the McMaster Library website. Once there, click on the “Articles/ Databases” tab, and then type “PsychInfo” into the box. Then, select “Scholars Portal Interface”. This will bring you to a typical search page. Here, click on “Advanced Search”, then, search for the article by authors’ names. If there’s only one author, you might also narrow the date-range to within a year of publication (scroll down for this function). Be sure that you’ve spelled everything correctly and configured your search correctly (e.g., select “author” if you’re searching by author!).

**A note on dates and deadlines.** The instructor and university reserve the right to modify elements of the course during the term. The university may change dates and deadlines for any or all courses in extreme circumstances. 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 (approx. topics 1-5):** Tuesday 10 July

**Final Exam (approx. topics 5-9):** Thursday 2 August

**Schedule of Topics and Readings**

**Topic 1. Introduction to the study of human sexuality.**

- Hatfield on Golden Fleece Awards (posted in entirety on *Avenue to Learn*)
- Yeater, Miller, Rinehart & Nason. (2012). Trauma and sex surveys meet minimal risk standards: Implications for Institutional Review Boards. *Psychological Science*. *NB: Find through Google Scholar (may be on-line only right now).*

**Topic 2. What is sex?**

- Cecil, Bogart, Wagstaff, Pinkerton, & Abramson. (2002). Classifying a person as a sexual partner: The impact of contextual factors. *Psychology and Health*, 17(2), 221-234.
- Medley-Rath (2007). Am I still a virgin?": What counts as sex in 20 years of *Seventeen*. *Sexuality & Culture: An Interdisciplinary Quarterly*, 11(2), 24-38.

**Topic 3. Sex drive and its correlates.**

- Baumeister, Catanese, & Vohs. (2001). Is there a gender difference in strength of sex drive? Theoretical views, conceptual distinctions, and a review of relevant evidence. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 5(3), 242–273. *Tip: This is a long review article. Read for its main points; don't try to memorize every detail.*
- Simpson & Gangestad. (1991). Individual differences in sociosexuality: Evidence for convergent and discriminant validity. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 60, 870-883. *Tip: Get the gist of what sociosexual orientation refers to here, but don't try to memorize every detail.*
- Ostovich & Sabini. (2004). How are sociosexuality, sex drive, and lifetime number of sex partners related? *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(10), 1255-1266. *Tip: This is a very long difficult article. Read the introductions and discussions and skim over the methods (perhaps even skip the results).*
- Clark. (2006). Are the correlates of sociosexuality different for men and women? *Personality and Individual Differences*, 41, 1321–1327.

**Topic 4. Erotic plasticity.**

- Hyde & Durik. (2000). Gender differences in erotic plasticity – evolutionary or sociocultural forces? comment on Baumeister (2000). *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(3), 375-379.
- Andersen, Cyranowski, & Aarestad. (2000). Beyond artificial, sex-linked distinctions to conceptualize female sexuality: Comment on Baumeister (2000). *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(3), 380-384.
- Baumeister, Catanese, Campbell, & Tice. (2000). Nature, culture, and explanations for erotic plasticity: Reply to Andersen, Cyranowski, and Aarestad (2000) and Hyde and Durik (2000). *Psychological Bulletin*, 126(3), 385-389.

### Topic 5. The Evolutionary Approach

- Overarching themes:
  - Buss & Schmitt. (1993). Sexual Strategies Theory: An evolutionary perspective on human mating. *Psychological Review*, 100(2), 204-232. *Tip: This is a long theoretical article that supports what we'll be learning in class. Read it before we begin the evolution section, but don't worry about the details – you'll learn those in class.*
  - Schmitt. (2003). Universal sex differences in the desire for sexual variety: Tests from 52 nations, 6 continents, and 13 islands. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 85(1), 85-104. *Ditto tip above.*
  - Gallup & Frederick. (2010). The science of sex appeal: An evolutionary perspective. *Review of General Psychology*, 14(3), 240-250.
- Women:
  - Buss & Shackelford. (2008). Attractive women want it all: Good genes, economic investment, parenting proclivities, and emotional commitment. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 6(1), 134-146.
  - Hanko, Master, & Sabini. (2004). Some evidence about character and mate selection. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 30(6), 732-742.
  - Gangestad, Simpson, Cousins, Garver-Apgar, & Christensen. (2004). Women's preferences for male behavioral displays change across the menstrual cycle. *Psychological Science*, 15(3), 203-207.
  - *Economist* article on disease rates and women's desire for masculine vs. feminine men (posted in entirety on *Avenue to Learn*)
- Men:
  - Singh & Singh. (2011). Shape and significance of feminine beauty: An evolutionary perspective. *Sex Roles*, 64, 723–731.
  - Haselton & Gildersleeve. (2011). Can men detect ovulation? *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 20(2), 87-92.
  - Bering on the sperm displacement hypothesis (posted in entirety on *Avenue to Learn*).

### Topic 6. The Social Psychology Approach

- Newcomb. (1956). The prediction of interpersonal attraction. *American Psychologist*, 11(11), 575-586.
- Dion, Berscheid, & Walster. (1972). What is beautiful is good. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 24(3), 285-290.
- Murray, Griffin, Derrick, Harris, Aloni, & Leder. (2011). Tempting fate or inviting happiness? Unrealistic idealization prevents the decline of marital satisfaction. *Psychological Science*, 22(5), 619-626.

### Topic 7. Love

- Dutton & Aron. (1974). Evidence for heightened sexual attraction under conditions of high anxiety. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 30(4), 510-517.
- Galperin & Haselton. (2010). Predictors of how often and when people fall in love. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 8(1), 5-28. *Tip: This is a long theoretical article – skim it for its main arguments and support thereof.*
- Sternberg. (1986). A triangular theory of love. *Psychological Review*, 93(2), 119-135. *Tip: We'll be discussing this model in some detail. Use this article for support (if you read it before lecture, that lecture will be very easy for you).*

### Topic 8. Non-Normative Sexuality 1: Homosexuality

- Bem. (1998). Is EBE theory supported by the evidence? Is it androcentric? A reply to Peplau et al. (1998). *Psychological Review*, 105(2), 395-398.
- Zietscha, Morleya, Shekara, et al. (2008). Genetic factors predisposing to homosexuality may increase mating success in heterosexuals. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 29, 424–433.
- Kunzig on the biology of homosexuality (posted in entirety on *Avenue to Learn*)

**Topic 9. Non-Normative Sexuality 2: Paraphilias**

- Wise. (1985). Fetishism – etiology and treatment: A review from multiple perspectives. *Comprehensive Psychiatry*, 26(3), 249-257.