

**SYLLABUS**  
**PSYCHOLOGY 3AC3: HUMAN SEXUALITY**  
**Department of Psychology, Neuroscience, and Behaviour**  
**McMaster University**  
**Winter Term 2010**

Course time: MW 8:30; F 10:30

Course location: HSC/1A1

**Professor:**

Dr. J. M. Ostovich

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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: TBA (website)

**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, “snow days”).

**Table of Contents:**

Course Description

Textbooks

E-mail and Website Policies

Assessment

Missed Tests Policy

A Note on Final Marks Calculations

A Note on Academic Integrity

Tips on How to Do Well in This Course

Dates, Topics, and Readings (Schedule)

**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*.

Required: *Human Sexuality Reader* (available exclusively at the bookstore; 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 a Blackboard/ELM 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 650 students this term 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.

**Assessment:** Your final mark will be based on three short midterms and a final exam. The midterms will be worth 60% of your mark in the course: Your *best two midterms* will be worth 25% each; your *worst midterm* will be worth 10%. The final exam will be worth the other 40%.

The midterms will be *non-cumulative* (*exception:* running themes in the course, such as evolutionary explanations of human sexual behaviour), and will cover lecture material *and* assigned readings, *even* readings not discussed in class. The final exam will be *cumulative*, and will be held during the examination period.

The midterms and final will be comprised of written answers only. Please see the schedule, below, for assessment dates.

**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*. 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 after one month.

If you miss the midterm, a makeup test will be provided *during class time* a week after the original test (yes, this means that you will miss a lecture if you miss the midterm). *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 assignment will be designed for you. *This make-up assignment could take the form of a research paper, essay examination, or oral examination. Therefore, please consider the consequences of missing a test carefully!*

**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)

**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 live by this rule because 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, it is your responsibility to visit with me or with one of 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>.

### **How to Do Well in This Course.**

#### **PLEASE READ CAREFULLY!**

Despite the fun topic, this is a difficult course. As 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!

My tests in this course will be *exclusively in written (essay) format*, with *no multiple choice*. Therefore, you must be sure to target your studying and understanding of this material such that you can write about the material in an intelligent manner.

In my 2<sup>nd</sup> year courses, you are expected to give detailed experimental descriptions (methods; IV; DV; results), and to have some rudimentary understanding of why a given piece of research was done, and of what its findings tell us.

In my 3<sup>rd</sup> year courses, I take this one step further. I now focus more strongly on testing your understanding of why a given experiment or survey study was done, and focus less strongly on point-by-point experimental descriptions.

That is: I expect that you are already able to think clearly about the mechanics of research, and are therefore ready to *summarize* experiments and survey studies into a few sentences (2-5 sentences, depending on complexity of the research). 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).

I also expect you to be able 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.

In order to do well on my tests, then, you must *practice* summarizing experimental and survey research, and you must *practice* thinking about what each finding in 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, then 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 for appointments at other times). Bring to these appointments *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.

Finally: There is little readings-related support for what we will be discussing in class. Therefore, in order to do well in this class, *you must attend lecture!!!* I realize that 8:30am lectures are horrible in all ways for most people, including me. However, I will do my best, and expect the same from you.

### **IMPORTANT DATES, TOPICS, AND READINGS**

Any changes to the information provided here  
will be announced on Blackboard.

**Basic structure of the course:** Below (next page), you will find a list of topics (with associated readings listed in [blue](#)) 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 timing of topics. I will keep you all updated on where you should be in your readings on the announcements section of our website.

**A note on the readings:** I do not plan to delete any of the readings listed below; in fact *extra readings* may even be assigned as we go (these will be posted on Blackboard; it is your responsibility to keep track of any added content by keeping up to date on the website). Plan carefully so that you do not find yourself “cramming” the readings at the last minute.

Note that I will not always explicitly discuss a given reading. *Read and learn all readings anyway.*

**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 the 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:** 25 Jan

**Midterm 2:** 22 Feb

**Midterm 3:** 15 Mar

**Final Exam:** To be scheduled by the Registrar

**TOPICS AND READINGS**

Again, I am not going to suggest actual dates for these topics, but instead will let you know, either in class or on our website (or both), when I plan to move on to the next topic.

**Topic 1. Introductory Stuff**

Read *Bullough, "Alfred Kinsey and the Kinsey Report..."* (in Reader)

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)

**Topic 2. Sex Drive**

Read *Ostovich & Sabini, "How are sociosexuality, sex drive, and lifetime number of sexual partners related?"* (available on course website)

**Topic 3. Gender Differences in Sexuality**

No associated readings

**Topic 4. The Evolutionary Approach** (note: this will last at least one month, perhaps closer to 2 months)

Read *Buss, Evolution of Desire*

**Topic 5. The Social Psychology Approach**

Read *Dion, Berscheid, & Walster, "What is beautiful is good"* (in Reader)

**Topic 6. 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 7. 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 8. If Time: Non-Normative Sexuality 2: Paraphilias**

Read *Wise, "Fetishism – Etiology and treatment"* (in Reader)