

Northwestern University
Fall 2025
Sociology of Sexuality
SOCIOLOGY 476-0-20 - GENDER STUDIES 490-0-20
Wednesday 9:30 AM – 12:20 PM, Parkes Hall 222

Professor Héctor Carrillo

Office: 1808 Chicago Avenue, Room 101

Office hours: By appointment. Please book at: <https://calendly.com/profcarrillo>

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This graduate seminar asks the following questions: What do we learn about society by studying sexuality? What do we learn about sexuality by studying society? We will focus on sociological approaches to studying sexuality and link sexuality studies to broader sociological questions about culture, social interaction, social inequality, globalization, social movements, science, health, and public policy. We will explore various theoretical and methodological approaches that have been used in sociological studies of sexuality—including those that guide sexuality-related analyses of meanings and identities, practices and behaviors, politics, power, relationships, population movement, collective identities and social movements, and morality and social control.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Students will be expected to:

- Do all required readings prior to each class session and participate in class discussion.
- Submit a critical review essay (approximately 5 to 7 double-spaced pages; 2,000 to 2,500 words) of the readings for one among class sessions 2 to 6. This review must be uploaded to Canvas no later than **Friday, October 17**. Instructions will be posted on Canvas.
- Submit a book review electronically (3 to 6 pages, approximately 1,000-1,500 words) by **Monday, December 8 at noon**. Instructions will be posted on Canvas.
- Circulate discussion questions in advance of one or two seminar sessions during the quarter. These questions must be posted by 5:00 pm on the Tuesday before class. I will circulate a sign-up sheet.
- Read weekly posted discussion questions before class and be prepared to discuss them.
- Make sure that your own submitted questions are addressed during our discussion of the readings.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:

Grading: You will earn a grade by completing the following assignments:

Book review	45% of the final grade
Critical review essay	30% of the final grade
Class participation and discussion questions	25% of the final grade

Attendance Policy: You are expected to attend class seminars on a regular basis.

Syllabus is Subject to Change: This syllabus and schedule are subject to change in the event of extenuating circumstances. If you are absent from class, it is your responsibility to check whether any announcements were made while you were absent.

Academic Integrity: Academic integrity is fundamental for this course and plagiarism and other forms of academic dishonesty will not be tolerated. Please review the [policy on academic integrity](#).

Accessibility: Any student requesting accommodations related to a disability or other condition is required to register with [AccessibleNU](#) (accessiblenu@northwestern.edu; 847-467-5530) and provide professors with an accommodation notification from AccessibleNU, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All information will remain confidential.

Communication:

This course will use the [Canvas course management system](#).

Safety and Security

Students can find useful resources for safety and security, academic support, and mental and physical health and well-being at the [NUhelp website](#) and [app](#).

SCHEDULE AND READINGS:

I will post articles and individual book chapters on Canvas as PDFs. You will need the books by Foucault, Carrillo, Hoang, and Vogler. The books by Foucault, Carrillo and Hoang are available electronically at the NU library website.

Class 1 – September 17: The Social Construction of Sexuality: Sexual Scripts and Sexual Fields

- Plummer, Ken. 1982. "Symbolic Interactionism and Sexual Conduct: An Emergent Perspective." In *Human Sexual Relations*, ed. Mike Brake, 223-41. New York: Pantheon.
- Simon, William and John H. Gagnon. 1986. "Sexual Scripts: Permanence and Change." *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 15, no. 2: 97-120 [Read 97-111].

- Green, Adam Isaiah. 2008. "Erotic Habitus: Toward a Sociology of Desire." *Theory and Society* 37:597–626 [Read 597-615].
- Green, Adam Isaiah. 2008. "The Social Organization of Desire: The Sexual Fields Approach." *Sociological Theory* 26, no.1: 25-50.
- Rubin, Gayle S. 1993 [1984]. "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality." In *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Abelove, Michèle Aina Barale and David M. Halperin, 3-44. New York: Routledge [Read 3-16].

Class 2 – September 24: Foucault and Queer Theory in Sociology

- Foucault, Michel. 1990 [orig.1979]. *History of Sexuality, Volume I: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage. Parts I, II, III, chapters 2 and 3 of part IV, and part V (pp. 1-73, 92-114, and 135-159).
- Epstein, Steven. 2003. An Incitement to Discourse: Sociology and *The History of Sexuality*. *Sociological Forum* 18, no. 3 (September): 486-500
- Gamson, Joshua and Dawne Moon. 2004. "The Sociology of Sexualities: Queer and Beyond." *Annual Review of Sociology* 30, no.1: 47-64.
- Moussawi, Ghassan and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz. 2020. "A Queer Sociology: On Power, Race, and Decentering Whiteness." *Sociological Forum* 35, no. 4: 1272-1289

Also recommended:

- Stein, Arlene, and Ken Plummer. 1994. "'I Can't Even Think Straight': 'Queer' Theory and the Missing Sexual Revolution in Sociology." *Sociological Theory* 12, no. 2: 178-87.

Class 3 – October 1: The Boundaries of Sexual Identity Categories

- Silva, Tony. 2025. "Sexual Identities: The State of the Field and Future Directions." *Sex and Sexualities* 1, no.1: 172-181.
- Dean, James Joseph. 2011. "The Cultural Construction of Heterosexual Identities," *Sociology Compass* 5, no.8: 679–687.
- Carrillo, Héctor and Amanda Hoffman. 2017. "'Straight with a Pinch of Bi': The Construction of Heterosexuality as an Elastic Category among Adult U.S. Men." *Sexualities*. doi: 10.1177/1363460716678561:1-19.
- Ward, Jane. 2020. *The Tragedy of Heterosexuality*. Chapter 1 (pp. 1-32).
- Carroll, Megan and Maya Wenzel. 2025. "New Dimensions, New Directions: Asexualities and Aromanticism in the 21st Century." *Sex and Sexualities* 1, no.1: 94-103.

Also recommended:

- Silva, Tony. 2016. "Bud-Sex: Constructing Normative Masculinity among Rural Straight Men That Have Sex With Men." *Gender & Society* (published online; doi: 10.1177/0891243216679934): 1-23.
- Ward, Jane. 2008. "Dude-sex: White Masculinities and 'Authentic' Heterosexuality among Dudes who Have Sex with Dudes." *Sexualities* 11(4): 414–434.

Class 4 – October 8: LGBTQ: Collective Identities, Rights, and Social Movements

- Gamson, Joshua. 1995. "Must Identity Movements Self-destruct? A Queer Dilemma." *Social Problems* 42, no. 3: 390-407.
- Armstrong, Elizabeth A. 2002. *Forging Gay Identities: Organizing Sexuality in San Francisco, 1950-1994*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapter 1 (pp.1-28).
- Ghaziani, Amin. 2011. "Post-Gay Collective Identity Construction." *Social Problems* 58, no. 1: 99-125.
- Valentine, David. 2007. *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*. (Durham: Duke University Press). Chapter 7: "The Logic of Inclusion: Transgender Activism" (pp. 173-203).

Also recommended:

- Ochoa, Jorge. "Queer Cultural Palimpsest: How Chicago's Kink Scene Responded to Unsettled Times of Contagion." *The Sociological Quarterly*, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00380253.2025.2486278>, pp. 1-22.

Class 5 – October 15: Sexuality, Place, and Space

- Ghaziani, Amin. 2021. "Why Gayborhoods Matter: The Street Empirics of Urban Sexualities." In Bitterman, Alex and Daniel Baldwin Hess (eds.), *The Life and Afterlife of Gay Neighborhoods: Renaissance and Resurgence* (pp. 87-113). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.
- Greene, Theodore. 2014. "Gay Neighborhoods and the Rights of the Vicarious Citizen." *City & Community* 13, no.2: 99-118.
- Saracino, Japonica Brown. 2015. "How Places Shape Identity: The Origins of Distinctive LBQ Identities in Four Small U.S. Cities." *American Journal of Sociology*, 121 (1): 1-63.
- Forstie, Clare. 2020. "Theory Making from the Middle: Researching LGBTQ Communities in Small Cities," *City & Community* 19, no.1: 153-168.

Also recommended:

- Orne, Jason. *Boystown*. 2017. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Saracino, Japonica Brown. 2017. *How Places Make Us: Novel LBQ Identities in Four Small Cities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Class 6 – October 22: Pleasure, Danger, and the Construction of the Normal

- Epstein, Steven. 2022. *The Quest for Sexual Health: How an Elusive Ideal Has Transformed Science, Politics, and Everyday Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. Chapters 5 to 8.
- Jones, Angela. 2020. *Camming: Money, Power, and Pleasure in the Sex Work Industry*. New York: New York University Press. Chapter 1.

- Westbrook, Laurel and Kristen Schilt. 2014. "Doing Gender, Determining Gender: Transgender People, Gender Panics, and the Maintenance of the Sex/Gender/Sexuality System." *Gender & Society* 28, no.1: 32-57.
- Burke, Kelsy and Dawne Moon. 2025. "The Pleasure and Danger of Religious Sexualities." *Sex and Sexualities* 1, no.1: 110-118.
- Robinson, Brandon Andrew. 2025. "I Feel the Most Pleasure When I Don't Have to Worry': On Sexual Comfort, t4t, and Trans Pleasure." *Sex and Sexualities* 1, no.1: 18-24.

Class 7 – October 29: Sexual Migration, Globalization, and Cross-racial Sexual Encounters

- Carrillo, Héctor. 2017. *Pathways of Desire: The Sexual Migration of Mexican Gay Men*. Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press.

Also recommended:

- Altman, Dennis. 2001. *Global Sex*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cantú, Lionel Jr. 2009. *The Sexuality of Migration: Border Crossings and Mexican Immigrant Men*, edited by Nancy A. Naples and Salvador Vidal-Ortiz. New York: New York University Press.
- Manalansan IV, Martin F. 2003. *Global Divas: Filipino Gay Men in the Diaspora*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Cheng, Sealing. 2010. *One the Move for Love: Migrant Entertainers and the U.S. Military in South Korea*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Class 8 – November 5: The Political Economy of Sexuality and Global Capitalism

- Hoang, Kimberly. 2015. *Dealing in Desire: Asian Ascendancy, Western Decline, and the Hidden Currencies of Global Sex Work*. Oakland: University of California Press.

Also recommended:

- Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2007. *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Padilla, Mark. 2007. *Caribbean Pleasure Industry: Tourism, Sexuality, and AIDS in the Dominican Republic*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Cantú Jr., Lionel. 2001. "A Place Called Home: A Queer Political Economy of Mexican Immigrant Men's Family Experiences." In *Queer Families, Queer Politics: Challenging Culture and the State*, edited by Mary Bernstein and Renate Reimann, 112-136. New York: Columbia University Press.

Class 9 – November 12: Scientific Expertise and Legal Classification

- Vogler, Stefan. 2021. *Sorting Sexualities: Expertise and the Politics of Legal Classification*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Also recommended:

- Waidzunus, Tom and Steven Epstein. 2015. "'For Men Arousal is Orientation': Bodily Truthing, Technosexual Scripts, and the Materialization of Sexualities through the Phallometric Test." *Social Studies of Science* 45, no. 2:187–213.
- Waidzunus, Tom J. 2013. "Intellectual Opportunity Structures and Science Targeted Activism: Influence of the Ex-gay Movement on the Science of Sexual Orientation." *Mobilization: An International Journal* 18, no.1:1-18.
- Carpenter, Laura and Monica J. Casper. 2009. "A Tale of Two Technologies: HPV Vaccination, Male Circumcision, and Sexual Health." *Gender & Society* 23, no. 6: 790-816.

Class 10 – November 19: Sexuality and the Decolonial Turn

- Puri, Jyoti, in conversation with Sa'ed Atshan , Minwoo Jung, and Zine Magubane. 2025. "In Plain Sight: Conversing Empires, Race, Sexuality, and Gender" *Sex and Sexualities* 1, no.1: 67-74.
- Jung, Minwoo. 2025. "Decolonizing the Global: Contested Cosmopolitanisms in Global Queer Activism." *The British Journal of Sociology*, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.13217>, pp. 1-10.
- Moussawi, Ghassan. 2013. "Queering Beirut, the 'Paris of the Middle East': Fractal Orientalism and Essentialized Masculinities in Contemporary Gay Travelogues." *Gender, Place and Culture*, 20, no. 7: 858–875.

December 8 – Book review due by noon.