

Archaeology and History of Sex and Gender in Antiquity

WARNING: Due to the nature of this class, you will be exposed to content that you may find offensive or that will make you uncomfortable. Enrolling in this course and staying enrolled in the course means you expressly agree to be exposed to material of a more sensitive, adult themed, and potentially offensive and even pornographic nature. You are required to do all the readings and watch all the documentaries in order to succeed in the class. If you find these topics offensive or emotionally difficult, this course is not recommended.

The instructor does not wish to unwittingly distress any individual, so a fair warning must be given. The course covers all those things never to discuss at dinner parties such as topics regarding politics, sex, and religion. Moreover, some of the material covered, during the lectures and in the readings and images portrayed, is explicit and/or potentially considered violent in nature. Presentation of this material by the instructor is potentially triggering. Students must consider whether they find such materials distressing to read, view, or discuss and decide thoughtfully whether to remain enrolled. Students who decide to remain enrolled should always keep in mind that the instructor is not presenting personal morals or opinions, but the entire range of the human experience. That is the nature of Anthropology. Sometimes you are exposed to things that may not be within your comfort zone.



Course Description

This course will introduce you to cultures of ancient Sumer, Egypt, Israel, Greece, and Rome through an examination of their conceptions and expressions of love, desire and sexuality as well as gender. These ideas are culturally determined and reflect important cultural assumptions potentially very different from our own. We will engage in an interdisciplinary study using a variety of literary genres including lyric poetry, love letters, philosophical dialogue, didactic poetry, the romance novel, material culture and art. The focus of this study will introduce a wide range of topics for discussion including the split between physical and spiritual love, philosophic ideals of “love” and “beauty,” perceptions of appropriate gender roles, physical ideals of female and male beauty, the different conceptions of human sexuality.

Learning Objectives

- To explore concepts of love, sex, and gender as well as sexuality uncovered by archaeology and illuminated by textual sources.
- To gain a greater understanding of how different cultures from antiquity expressed their sometimes radically different and sometimes very similar notions of love, sex, etc.
- To gain the ability to speak knowledgeably about the topics, artifacts, and cultures covered in this course.

Learning Outcomes

The overall goal of this course is to help students break down assumptions about the givenness of dominant notions of gender and sexuality. You should be able to walk away from this course with a greater appreciation of the diversity in the human experience, while at the same time gaining insight into some of the unifying experiences that we share as humans across cultures. By exploring these topics using the context of antiquity, you will hopefully come to the conclusion that the issues, experiences, the debates, the discussions, etc., that is part of our contemporary world is not new. Nothing is new under the sun.

Two terms to become familiar with:

- Ethnocentrism: The belief that your culture (religion, ethnicity, or race) is superior and thus judging all others based on what you value as good, normal, moral, etc.
- Cultural Relativism: the notion that all cultures have their own measures of what is good, normal, moral, etc. and that in order to understand individual practices we must look to the culture in which they are found.

Required Reading

- Sex in Antiquity: Exploring Gender and Sexuality in the Ancient World edited by Mark Masterson, Nancy Sorkin Rabinowitz and James Robson (2018), Routledge Taylor & Francis, London.
- Sexuality in Green and Roman Culture by Marilyn Skinner (2014), Blackwell Publishing, Oxford.
- Additional Readings as Noted in the Tentative Course Schedule

Assignments

- Attendance and Participation in Class Discussions (20%)
- Weekly Discussion Threads (20%)
- Exam Essays (30%)
- Podcast Project (30%)

Tentative Course Schedule

Week	Topic	Assignments	Readings
1	Introduction Basics of Human Sexuality and Gender		<i>Shamans and Northern Cosmology: the direct historical approach to Mesolithic Sexuality</i> by Robert Schmidt Introduction in <i>Sex in Antiquity</i> Introduction: Why Ancient Sexuality? Issues and Approaches in <i>Sexuality in Green and Roman Culture</i>
2	Paleolithic and Neolithic Mesopotamia Sexuality and Gender		<i>Assumptions About the Assinnu: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality in Ancient Texts and Modern Scholarship</i> By Kelsie Ehalt <i>Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature</i> By Gwendolyn Leick

Week	Topic	Assignments	Readings
3	Mesopotamia Sexuality and Gender		<p><i>Assumptions About the Assinnu: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality in Ancient Texts and Modern Scholarship</i> By Kelsie Ehalt</p> <p><i>Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature</i> By Gwendolyn Leick</p>
4	Mesopotamia Sexuality and Gender		<p><i>Assumptions About the Assinnu: Gender, Sex, and Sexuality in Ancient Texts and Modern Scholarship</i> By Kelsie Ehalt</p> <p><i>Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature</i> By Gwendolyn Leick</p>
5	Mesopotamia Sexuality and Gender		<p>Fertility and Gender in the Ancient Near East and Too Young - too Old? Sex and Age in Mesopotamian literature in <i>Sex in Antiquity</i></p>
6	<p>Ancient Israel</p> <p>David & Bathsheba</p> <p>David & Jonathan</p>		<p>“I Have hired you with my son’s mandrakes”: Women’s Reproductive Magic in Ancient Israel” & Guarding the House: Conflict, Rape, and David’s Concubines in <i>Sex in Antiquity</i></p>

Week	Topic	Assignments	Readings
7	<p>Ancient Egypt</p> <p>Turin Satiric-Erotic Papyrus</p> <p>Niankhhknum and Khnumhotep</p>		<p><i>Some Aspects of Ancient Egyptian Sexual Life</i> by Lisa Manniche</p> <p><i>Re-em(bed)ding Sex: Domesticity, Sexuality and Ritual in New Kingdom Egypt</i> by Lynn Meskell</p> <p><i>The Body in Ancient Egyptian Texts and Representations</i> by Emily Teeter</p> <p><i>Same-Sex Desire, Conjugal Constructs, and the Tomb of Niankhhknum and Khnumhotep</i> by Greg Reeder</p> <p><i>Embracing His Double: Niankhhknum and Khnumhotep</i> by Vera Vasiljevic</p>
8	<p>Ancient Greece and Rome: Prostitution, Orgies and Sexual Education</p>		<p>Fantasy and the Homosexual Orgy: Unearthing the Sexual Scripts of Ancient Athens, Was Pederasty Problematic? Before Queerness?, “Sex Ed”, and Is there a history of Prostitution in <i>Sex in Antiquity</i></p>
9	<p>Ancient Greece and Rome: Epic Poems reinforcing Gender Roles.</p> <p>Medea & Perseus</p>		<p>The Homeric Age: Epic Sexuality in <i>Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture</i></p> <p>The Archaic Age: Symposium and Initiation in <i>Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture</i></p>
10	<p>Ancient Greece and Rome: the Philosophy of Desire and Attraction</p>		<p>Plato’s <i>Symposium</i></p> <p>Late Archaic Athens: More than Meets the Eye & Classical Athens: The Politics of Sex in <i>Sexuality in Greek and Roman Culture</i></p>

Week	Topic	Assignments	Readings
11	<p>Ancient Greece and Rome: The Band of Thebes and Alexander the Great's Love for</p> <p>Ancient Greece and Rome: Emperor Elagabalus and the Gallae</p>		<p>The Early Hellenistic Period: Turning Inwards & The Later Hellenistic Period: The Feminine Mystique in <i>Sexuality in Green and Roman Culture</i></p> <p>Elites in the Empire: Self and Others in <i>Sexuality in Green and Roman Culture</i></p>
12	Ancient Greece and Rome: Rome in the Beginning		Early Rome: A Tale of Three Culture. Republican and Augustan Rome: The Soft Embrace of Venus in <i>Sexuality in Green and Roman Culture</i>
13	Ancient Greece and Rome: Coming Undone		The Imperial Populace: Toward Salvation? In <i>Sexuality in Green and Roman Culture</i>
14	Ancient Greece and Rome: The Art of the Body		Chapters 1 to 3 in Michael Squire's <i>The Art of the Body: Antiquity and Its Legacy</i>
15	Project Presentations		
16	Project Presentations		