### Psychology of Human Sexuality

### Course Syllabus

January 16, 2018

## Psychology 231, section 001, CRN 42022

## Spring 2018, University of New Mexico

## Wednesdays 5:30 – 8:00 pm

**Classroom: Dane Smith Hall 129, UNM Main Campus**

**Teacher:**

**Geoffrey Miller, Ph.D.; Associate Professor of Psychology, UNM**

Office hours: Thursdays 11 am to noon, in Logan Hall 160

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**Teaching Assistant:**

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**Overview of syllabus and course content**

*This syllabus will be crucial to your success in this course. Read this whole syllabus before the second class meets – you will be quizzed on its contents.**Keep it accessible, and refer to it regularly throughout the course*.

Sexuality is central to our lives. It leads to our most important relationships – with lovers, spouses, and children. It drives much of our social-networking, status-seeking, and consumer behavior. It evokes our strongest passions — lust, love, pride, hope, and ecstasy, but also jealousy, heartbreak, despair, shame, and regret.

This course introduces the psychology of human sexuality in its evolutionary, cultural, reproductive, and social context. We’ll explore:

* The history, nature, and challenges of sex research
* The origins and functions of sexual reproduction
* Sexual selection theory
* Sex in human evolution
* Sexual attraction
* Sexual behavior, pleasure, and orgasm
* Sexual competition among males and females
* Sexual jealousy and mate-guarding
* Ovulatory cycle shifts in female attractiveness and preferences
* Sexual promiscuity, curiosity, variety-seeking, and hookups
* Sexual conflict between the sexes, harassment, stalking, and rape
* Alternative mating strategies: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy
* Sex differences and gender
* Same-sex sexual behavior, homosexuality, and sexual fluidity
* BDSM, kink, unusual sexual preferences, and paraphilias
* Sexual barter, consumerist dating, prostitution, and pornography
* Sexual attraction to mental traits: mental health, intelligence, and willpower
* Romantic love, pair-bonding, long-term mating, and monogamy
* Polyamory, open relationships, and non-monogamy
* Sexual morality and romantic virtues
* Marriage and institutionalized sexual relationships

This course will focus on sexual psychology, behaviors, emotions, and relationships. It will not be a remedial ‘sex education’ course covering material that you should have learned in a high school health class. Thus, we will not focus very much on medical, clinical, or health issues such as genital anatomy, contraception, abortion, pregnancy, childbirth, infertility, sexually transmitted diseases, or sexual dysfunctions.

**Required materials: textbooks and 3-ring binders**

Readings for this class will be from one human sexuality textbook and two popular science books on evolutionary approaches to sexuality.

**Notes on the readings**:

* Important: weekly assigned readings before each class will take about two or three hours. If you don’t do the readings conscientiously, you won’t learn much in this course, and you won’t get a good grade.
* After each reading assignment listed in the course schedule below, I give the page count for the actual text you’ll need to read (excluding boxes to skip, or journal article references), so you can plan your reading times.
* Read the assignments in the order listed for each class; they’ll make more sense.
* Read when you’re awake and attentive. Read assignments in plenty of time before the class when they’ll be discussed. Take notes on them. Digest them. Be ready to discuss them with your peers in class.
* Bring the readings to class with you, so you can refer to them during the open-book quizzes. It’s helpful to use underlining or highlighting of key ideas and findings, so you can locate them quickly during the quizzes.

**The three books to buy for this class:**

**1) Discovering human sexuality (3rd edition)** (2015) by Simon LeVay, Janice Baldwin, & John Baldwin

* Amazon: https://www.amazon.com/Discovering-Human-Sexuality-Third-Looseleaf/dp/1605353795/
* Sunderland, MA: Sinauer, ISBN-13: 978-1605352756 (looseleaf)
* From UNM Bookstore: about $95 new, $75 used
* From Amazon.com: about $80 used
* This is the best-written, most evolutionarily-oriented textbook on human sexuality.
* By getting the looseleaf edition, you can just bring the relevant chapter(s) to each class for the open-book quizzes, rather than having to carry the whole paperback around. I recommend buying two 3-ring binders for the textbook: a thicker one to keep the whole looseleaf textbook, and a thinner one to bring to class just containing the reading for each day.

# 2) Why women have sex: Women reveal the truth about their sex lives, from adventure to revenge (and everything in between) (2010). By Cindy Meston & David Buss.

* New York: St. Martin’s Griffin. ISBN-13: 978-0312662653 (paperback)
* From UNM Bookstore: about $22 new, $14 used
* From Amazon.com: about $20 new, $6 used, $8 Kindle
* An empirically-based exploration of female sexuality by a leading sex researcher and an evolutionary psychologist.

**3) What women want** (2016) by Tucker Max and Geoffrey Miller

* New York: Anchor Books, ISBN-13 978-0316375337 (paperback)
* From UNM Bookstore: about $17 new, $14 used
* From Amazon.com: about $10 new, $6 used
* This is our recent book of dating advice for young straight men, but it's based on scientific insights and evidence that apply to everybody's mating strategies.
* Warning: This book is written in a very blunt, candid, self-help style; it includes profanity, jokes, satire, and politically incorrect observations

**Three-ring binders**. I also suggest you get three 3-ring binders:

* a thick one (at least 2”) for the Levay looseleaf textbook – make sure it has plenty of room so you can easily remove particular chapters
* a medium (about 1.5”) one to archive all of your journal paper readings, quizzes, and movie reports
* a thinner one (about 1”) to bring individual Levay textbook chapters and journal paper readings to class so you can refer to them during quizzes.

**Optional materials**

Apart from the required readings, here are some suggested *optional* books, if you’re interested in diving deeper into certain sexuality topics:

* *The mating mind* (2001) by Geoffrey Miller, $15 paperback [how sexual selection shaped the evolution of the human mind]
* *Dr. Tatiana’s sex advice to all creation* (2003) by Olivia Judson. $13 paperback. [sexual evolution in other species]
* *Bonk: The curious coupling of science and sex* (2009) by Mary Roach. $13 paperback. [sex research and physiology]
* *Perv: The sexual deviant in all of us* (2013) by Jesse Bering. $12 paperback. [paraphilias and fetishes]
* *The ultimate guide to kink: BDSM, role play, and the erotic edge* (2012) by Tristan Taormino. $16 paperback [kinky sex]
* *Ethical porn for dicks: A man's guide to responsible viewing pleasure* (2016) by David Ley, $11 paperback [a sex therapist examines the ethics of watching porn]
* *Designer relationships* (2015) by Mark Michaels and Patricia Johnson, $15 paperback [an overview of polyamory and open relationships]

TV series: I also recommend the recent TV series *Masters of Sex* about the early days of sex research, starring Michael Sheen as Dr. William Masters and Lizzy Caplan as Virginia Johnson; it’s now in its 4th season, with 46 episodes available: <http://www.amazon.com/Masters-Sex-Michael-Sheen/dp/B00HI4EGQA/>. Other recent TV series with interesting sexual themes include *Broad City, Polyamory, Scandal, Shameless, The Affair, The Girlfriend Experience*, and *Transparent*.

Finally, at <http://www.thematinggrounds.com/> , you can check out our free “Mating Grounds” podcast. It’s mostly science-based dating advice to young straight men, but it might also interest women who are curious about how guys think and feel about women, dating, and sex. We’ve also done expert interviews with several leading sex researchers. We’ve released over 150 episodes, with over two million downloads so far.

**Class structure**

In class, we’ll have a combination of lectures, discussions, attendance checks, and quizzes. There will be a 10-minute break near the middle of each class.

Lectures: For about half of each class, I’ll be lecturing with Powerpoint slides and occasional video clips. Usually I won’t repeat the material in the readings, but will talk about additional ideas, perspectives, theories, historical contexts, empirical findings, and course content in relation to current events and social issues.

Attendance checks: At the start of each class at 5:30 pm, and at the end of each class around 8:00 pm, we’ll have an attendance check where you’ll print your name on an attendance sheet. These will contribute to your class participation grade.

Quizzes: After the first class meeting, there will be an 8-item multiple-choice quiz covering the previous lecture and the reading assignments. These will typically happen near the middle of class, just before or after a break. See the quizzes section below for more detail.

Class rules

Your classmates deserve your civility, respect, and cooperation. Many UNM students have worked hard to get to this university, work hard to get the grades and pay the tuition to stay here, and have many conflicting responsibilities, such as part-time work, children, spouses, elderly parents, volunteer work, sports, etc. UNM tuition and fee rates are about $250 per credit-hour for NM residents, so this 3 credit-hour class costs about $750, or about $50 for each of our 15 class meetings; for non-NM-residents, it’s over $170 per class. Please appreciate how much your classmates are paying to be here, and the sacrifices they have made to attend UNM. To help everybody learn as much as they can from this course, there are some class rules, which I enforce strictly:

* Do not arrive late. Each class starts with an attendance check to see who has arrived on time; this will start at 5:30, not 5:35 pm. It is best to have a seat and be ready for class by 5:25. Learn how long you’ll need to find parking.
* Do not leave early. Each class ends with another attendance check to see who has stayed for the whole class. Do not start to pack up your notes and books before 8:00 pm, unless we’re clearly finished with class early, or if you have a genuine emergency.
* Do not talk to other students in class while I’m lecturing. If someone else around you talks too much, or disturbs your concentration in any other way, please let me know.
* During discussions, be thoughtful, respectful, and constructive. Be polite, respectful, and inclusive, and discuss issues based on theories and evidence, not just personal anecdotes and opinions.
* Do not eat food or chew gum in class. Safely sealed drinks (e.g. coffee cups with lids or water bottles) are OK to bring. During peer discussion, chewing gum would interfere with your ability to talk clearly.
* Turn off mobile phones in class. Do not them to call, text, facebook, or web-surf. If you must remain available for a child or other dependent, set your phone to vibrate.
* Do not come to class if you are too tired, ill, hung over, etc. to pay attention and participate properly; do not come if you have a cold or flu and are likely to be infectious. We will excuse absences for illness with a doctor’s note. Get your rest and stay healthy.
* Eat something before class. If you don’t have time for dinner, have a snack. Hungry students can’t pay attention. Your brain needs a good, steady supply of protein, fat, and complex carbohydrates to work properly.
* If you are a parent: If you need to bring a baby or young child to class occasionally, that’s OK, but please alert me before class when you do. Older children may not be appropriate to bring to class, given the sexual content of lectures, images, and discussions.
* If you are on a UNM sports team, please let the TA know in advance when you will need to miss classes and quizzes due to travel and sports events.

**Accommodation Statement.** Accessibility Services (Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506) provides academic support to students who have disabilities. If you think you may need any accommodations, such as alternative accessible formats for undertaking and completing coursework, you should contact this service right away to assure your needs are met in a timely manner. If you need local assistance in contacting Accessibility Services, see the Bachelor and Graduate Programs office.

**Grades**

**Your grade for this course will depend on three types of assessment:**

* **Attendance.** You’ll get 1 point of credit for attendance sheet that you sign; there will be one at the beginning of every class, and one at the end; these will add up to determine 20% of your overall grade.
* **Quizzes.** There will beabout 13 in total, one in each class (after the first class); together, they will determine 50% of your overall grade.
* **Movie reports.** There will be 3 in total, due at about equal intervals throughout the course; together, they will determine 30% of your overall grade.

So you can know how well you are doing, every attendance score, quiz grade, and movie report grade will be posted on the UNM Learn site for this class as soon as the grade is entered in our records.

At the end of term, there will be a fairly generous grading curve to determine final course grades. In previous versions of this class, the class average was about a B or B+, although the grade average out of 100 points was only in the 70s (e.g. averaging about 7/10 on quizzes and movie reports.)

**Attendance.** There will be attendance sheets passed around at the beginning of class at 5:30 and the end of class, which will usually be sometime between 7:30 and 8:00. Please print your name clearly on one of these sheets. You’ll get up to two points for attendance for each class. These will add up to determine 20% of your overall grade. If you are late to class or leave early, you’ll miss these and lose points. Note that most students are absent for at least one or two of the classes during the term, and you can still get a very good grade even if you miss a couple of classes.

**Quizzes**

Near the middle of every class, just before or after the break, there will be a short, 8-minute quiz that includes 8 multiple-choice questions. These will begin on the second day of class.

On these quizzes, you’ll print your name clearly at the top of the quiz sheet, and then you’ll circle the answer that you think is correct. You’ll turn these quiz sheets in afterwards for grading by the TA. Please circle your answer clearly; if you made a mistake, put a big ‘X’ through the wrong answer and double-circle the right answer.

Quizzes will be graded on a 0 to 10 scale. You will get a minimum of 2 points just for showing up and completing the quiz, even if you get all of the answers wrong. Then you will get one additional point for each right answer on the 8 questions. There is no penalty for guessing.

Each quiz will cover the previous class lecture and peer discussions, and the course readings assigned for that day. The quiz in the middle of each class will not cover the material in the first half of that day’s lecture. If you regularly read and understand the textbook assignments, and pay attention in class, you will do well on the quizzes. If you miss a class, you get a zero for that day’s quiz, and you’ll also have trouble with the quiz in the following class, since about half of its questions will cover the lecture material that you missed. This makes class attendance very important.

The quiz questions will range from very easy to quite hard. Most of the questions should be easy if you have kept up with readings and lectures. There may be a couple of questions that require a bit of thought, and which I do not expect most students to get right. If you consistently get 7 or 8 out of 10 on the quizzes, you are doing very well, and would probably get at least a B in the course.

Quizzes will be open-book. You can refer to the textbooks, other readings, and lecture notes if you want. However, since you will have an average of only one minute to answer each question, you will probably not be able to find the right answers if you have not read the textbook assignments ahead of class, and if you did not attend the previous class. The open-book policy is to minimize rote memorization and maximize your ability to apply ideas from the course to real-life and hypothetical situations. Most real jobs are also “open-book” – but you’ll need to know where to look, to quickly find the information you need, whether you go into medicine, law, business, research, or whatever.

You may not talk with other students during the quiz, and you may not copy their answers. You may not call or text-message anyone either. Violations will be subject to the normal university procedures and penalties.

Right after each quiz, I will reveal the correct answers, so you’ll have immediate feedback. We should be able to grade your quizzes fairly quickly, soyou should also be able to look up your grade on the UNM Learn system within a few days of each quiz.

By the end of the semester, you will have taken about 13 quizzes, and performance on these will determine 50% of your final grade. Thus, each quiz is worth less than 4% of your course grade. Do not panic if you miss a couple. At the end of term, we will drop the grade for your lowest quiz before calculating your quiz average, so if you have one unexcused absence, you don’t have to worry. The quizzes will be added together at the end of the semester and there will be a generous grading curve so that even if you miss a couple of quizzes (which most students do), you can still get a good grade in the course.

These quizzes will help you learn in several ways. They will encourage regular, prompt attendance, so you actually get the benefits out of being at a real university with real students and a real live professor – rather than just reading the textbooks at home, or taking an online course. The quizzes will give you quick feedback about how well you’re doing in the class all the way through the semester, so you can improve your study habits if you are not happy with your quiz grades. They will give less of an unfair advantage to students who cope better with high-stress situations such as midterm and final exams. Finally, taking many little quizzes rather than two big exams provides a more accurate, reliable assessment of how well you really know the material; your grade is less vulnerable to random disruptions such as getting a cold right before an exam.

**Movie reports**

The last component of grading is that you will write three very short movie reports throughout the course.

Movie reports are short, concise, thoughtful reactions to movies that I will suggest as relevant to particular parts of the course. Each movie report will be a maximum of ONE PAGE, with no more than 600 words on that page.

The rationale for these is simple. I want you to learn how sexuality research insights can actually apply in real life. But how can I assess this? We don’t share the same experiences, so I can’t see whether you really understand your life in a deeper way from learning about human sexuality. Well, in modern society, one way we can share the same experience is by watching the same movie. This gives us some common reference points – common characters, behaviors, and relationships – that you can write about in the light of what you have learned in the course. You’ve probably watched more than 10,000 hours of television and movies before coming to UNM, so I expect your ‘visual literacy’ should be well developed, and your ability to interpret and to critically analyze what you watch should be well-honed.

Each report will be graded on a scale of 0 to 10. You’ll get at least two points if you turn in a report in the required format, on time, that demonstrates you watched the movie attentively. You’ll get more points if you interpret the movie’s characters, behaviors, and relationships in the light of new things you learned in this class. We give 10 full points rarely, if you turn in a very interesting, creative, thoughtful, and knowledgeable report. You’re doing well if you consistently get 7 or 8 points on the movie reports.

### Details on movie reports

A movie report is NOT a summary of the plot, or a review of the movie, or a record of your emotional reactions to the movie. Rather, it is a way for you to show me how you can apply ideas and insights from class to understand human sexuality in new and deeper ways.

Movies include lots of characters, behaviors, and relationships. Do not write about all of them. Choose just one or two as your focus. Talk about how a good sex researcher would interpret the character’s thoughts, feelings, actions, strategies, interests, and relationships. Use the ideas, terms, and theories from the readings and lectures, to show how they can help you understand real human life (or at least, life as depicted in movies).

For each report, you will be able to pick from a list of recent, high-quality, well-acted movies that are widely available. For each report, I will try to include a range of movies that appeal to both sexes, different personality types, and different interests.

You will buy, rent, or stream these movies and watch them at home. I recommend Blu-Ray or HDTV streaming if possible so you can track the nuances of character’s facial expressions and movements. Many of these films are available through instant streaming services such as Amazon Prime, Hulu, Google play, or iTunes. Or you can rent or buy the DVD or Blu-Ray online from Amazon, or from a local store such as Hastings.

So you can make an informed choice about which movie to watch for each movie report, I’ve included details about each movie below: title, release date, lead actors, and director. I’ve also included the average quality ratings from IMDB (the Internet Movie Database) (which range from 1 to 10) and Metacritic (an online summary of movie critic ratings) (which range from 0 to 100). I’ve also included the MPAA ratings (e.g. PG-13 or R), and, in parentheses, the kids-in-mind.com estimates of overall sex, violence, and swearing in each movie, each on a scale from 0 (most mild) to 10 (most severe and explicit). For example, a movie with a kids-in-mind rating of 3.4.5 probably includes some kissing (3/10), some mild fighting (4/10), and some swearing (5/10). A movie with a kids-in-mind rating of 9.8.10 probably depicts graphic sexual intercourse (9/10), brutal violence (8/10), and pervasive graphic swearing (10/10). Finally, I include a link to the youtube trailer for the movie; these are usually 2-3 minutes and give you a pretty good sense of the movie.

When selecting which movie to cover for each report, I’d recommend reading the descriptions below carefully, looking at the movie details online (e.g. at IMDB, Metacritic, Amazon, Netflix, kids-in-mind, Rotten Tomatoes, and/or Wikipedia), and watching the trailer. Then pick a movie, stream or rent it, watch it, and think about what you could write about. If you can’t think of some good ideas after a couple of days, try a different movie. Different students resonate to different movies; the students who get the best grades on movie reports are those who choose their movies most carefully, given their interests and tastes.

For each movie that you decide to write a report on, I recommend that you watch it twice. A second viewing often helps in understanding the nuances of character motivation and behavior. It also decreases your chances of making serious errors of interpretation. The best tactic would be to watch the movie once, and make some notes immediately afterwards about possible themes and events to write about. Then, a few days later, watch the movie again, and make more detailed notes for writing your first draft. Give yourself at least a week to do each movie report. Don’t leave them to the last minute.

You’ll upload each movie report on UNM Learn by midnight on the day that it is due. Your upload file should be in MS Word format, a maximum of ONE PAGE, with no more than 600 words on that page. They should be single-spaced in 11 point Arial font, with one-inch margins at top, bottom, and sides. Do not use smaller font, weird font, or any font color other than black.

At the top of the Word file you must put the following information as shown below:

Human Sexuality theme(s) X(,Y, Z, etc) in

The title of the movie you are analyzing:

By your name

For example,

Assortative Mating and Adaptive Self-Deception in

American Beauty

By Isabel Garcia

In these reports I expect you to show a university-level mastery of English writing, including not just good grammar, spelling, and composition, but the ability to grab me with your first sentence, to fascinate me by the end of your first paragraph, to get to your main points quickly and clearly, and to support them with well-reasoned arguments and insights.

When referring to characters in your report, please use the proper character name (e.g. “Naomi Lapaglia”), not the actor’s name (e.g. “Margot Robbie”) or description (e.g. “Surprisingly dominant but long-suffering gold-digger”). To look up the proper character names, look at IMDB’s or Metacritic’s web page for the movie.

Do NOT turn in a first draft – something you wrote the night before it was due. I want a polished report that has been developed and improved over at least a week. I expect you to have done a good outline, a first draft, a revision of your first draft (perhaps with the help of a class-mate or friend), a thorough proof-reading for grammar, spelling, and clarity, and a letter-perfect final version. This is reasonable to ask for a one-page report.

In the real-life jobs that you get after graduation, you will probably have to do lots of things similar to writing reports like this – presenting concise, focused analyses of situations in the light of your expert knowledge. This may be a much more useful skill to learn than the sorts of literary criticism essays you may be used to writing in English Composition courses.

**Movie Report 1 (due Monday Feb 19: upload Word doc to UNM Learn by midnight)**:

Covering topics for classes 1-5. Possible topics to write about include:

* The history, nature, and challenges of sex research
* The origins and functions of sexual reproduction
* Sexual selection theory; functions of mate choice
* Signaling theory and fitness indicators
* Human sexual evolution
* Prehistoric versus modern mating
* Social proof: Dominance, status, prestige, popularity, and fame
* Verbal courtship, talk, and conversation in dating
* Sexual attraction, the human body, and physical attractiveness
* Sexual behavior, pleasure, foreplay, copulation, masturbation, and orgasm

(Focus on only a few of these topics at most!)

Write on one of these movie choices:

**American Beauty (**1999). Sexual drama set in suburbia. Stars Kevin Spacey, Annette Bening, Thora Birch, Wes Bentley. Director Sam Mendes. IMDB 8.4; Metacritic 86. Rated R (8.6.7). Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Q3ltyPJJMQ>

**Her** (2013). In the near future, a lonely writer falls in love with an artificial intelligence. Stars Joaquin Phoenix, Amy Adams, Scarlett Johansson. Director Spike Jonze. IMDB 8.0; Metacritic 90. Rated R. Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WzV6mXIOVl4>

**Hysteria** (2011). Comedy drama about the invention of the vibrator in 19th century Britain. Stars Maggie Gyllenhaal, Hugh Dancy. Director Tanya Wexler. IMDB 6.7; Metacritic 53. Rated R (7.3.4). Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FWReqkTWfA>

**Kinsey** (2004). Biographical drama about pioneering sex researcher Alfred Kinsey. Stars Liam Neeson, Laura Linney, Chris O’Donnell, Peter Sarsgaard. Director Bill Condon. IMDB 7.1; Metacritic 79. Rated R (10.4.7). Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ppZwSABxeYE>

**Sense & Sensibility** (1995). Mating and marriage in 19th century England. Stars Emma Thompson, Kate Winslet, Hugh Grant. Director Ang Lee. IMDB 7.7, Metacritic 84. Rated PG.

**Movie Report 2 (due Monday April 2: upload to UNM Learn by midnight)**:

Covering sexuality topics from classes 6-10. Possible topics include:

* Mating markets, sex ratios, and mate search
* Sexual competition among males and females
* Sexual jealousy, mate-guarding, and intimate partner violence
* Ovulatory cycle shifts in female attractiveness and preferences
* Sexual promiscuity, curiosity, variety-seeking, and hookups
* Sexual conflict, harassment, stalking, and rape
* The tender defender and female choice for agreeable protectors
* Alternative mating strategies: narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy
* Sex differences and gender
* Classical liberal feminism, gender feminism, and Darwinian feminism
* Same-sex sexual behavior, homosexuality, and sexual fluidity
* Atypical sexuality, paraphilias, and BDSM/kink
* Polyamory, open sexuality, and consensual non-monogamy

(Focus on only a few of these topics at most!)

Write on one of these movie choices:

**50 Shades of Grey** (2015). A female college student enters a Dom/sub relationship with a male billionaire. Stars Dakota Johnson and Jamie Dornan. Director Sam Taylor-Johnson. IMDB 4.1; Metacritic 46. Rated R (10.5.5). Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SfZWFDs0LxA>

**Carol** (2015). A stylish lesbian romance set in the repressed 1950s. Stars Cate Blanchett, Rooney Mara, Sarah Paulson. Director Todd Haynes. IMDB 7.2, Metacritic 95. Rated R (7.3.5). Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H4z7Px68ywk

**Mean Girls** (2004). Sexual and status competition among female high school students. StarsLindsay Lohan, Rachel McAdams, Tina Fey, Amy Poehler. Director Mark Waters. IMDB 7.0; Metacritic 66. Rated PG-13 (5.4.4). Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6YjSIvmNjT8>

**The Beguiled** (2017). Erotic drama set in a Southern young lady’s school during the Civil War. Stars Nicole Kidman, Kirsten Dunst, Colin Farrell, Elle Fanning. Director Sofia Coppola. IMDB 6.9, Metacritic 77; Rated R (6.6.2). Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iBoLK5z_FHo> (Note: This movie won’t be released on DVD or streaming until about Oct. 10)

**The Wolf of Wall Street** (2013). Rise and fall of a sociopathic narcissist. Stars Leonardo DiCaprio, Jonah Hill, Margot Robbie. Director Martin Scorsese. IMDB 8.2; Metacritic 75. Rated R (10.4.10). Trailer: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iszwuX1AK6A](%20https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iszwuX1AK6A%20)

**Movie Report 3 (due Monday May 7: upload to UNM Learn by midnight)**:

Covering sexuality topics from classes 11-14. Possible topics include:

* Sexual barter in ‘normal’ relationships
* Female choice for male resources, wealth, and success
* The sex industry: prostitution, lap-dancers, etc.
* Pornography, sex toys, and virtual sex
* Sexual attraction to mental traits: mental health, intelligence, and willpower
* Romantic proof, romantic love, commitment, and pair-bonding
* Sexual morality, mating goals, and romantic virtues
* Sexual commitment mechanisms
* Marriage and institutionalized sexual relationships
* Polyamory and open relationships

(Focus on only a few of these topics at most!)

Write on one of these movie choices:

**Boogie Nights** (1997). Drama about the rise of the pornography industry. Stars Mark Wahlberg, Heather Graham, Julianne Moore, John C. Reilly. Director Paul Thomas Anderson, IMDB 7.9; Metacritic 85. Rated (9.7.10). Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QzmUsgJE4DY>

**Crazy, Stupid, Love** (2011). Divorced guy tries to get back in the mating game with help from a Pick-Up Artist. Stars Steve Carell, Ryan Gosling, Emma Stone, Julianne Moore. Directors Gleen Ficarra and John Requa. IMDB 7.4; Metacritic 68. Rated R (6.2.5). Trailer: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8iCwtxJejik>

**Don Jon** (2013). Porn addict and Pick-Up Artist finds love. Stars Joseph Gordon-Levitt, Scarlett Johansson, Julianne Moore. Director Joseph Gordon-Levitt. IMDB 6.6; Metacritic 66. Rated R (8.3.10). Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bcGO_oAahV8>

**Ex Machina** (2015). A young male programmer falls for a female robot. Stars Alicia Vikander, Domhnall Gleeson, and Oscar Isaac. Director Alex Garland. IMDB 7.7; Metacritic 78. Rated R (6.5.6). Trailer: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XYGzRB4Pnq8>

**Professor Marston and the Wonder Women** (2017). The tale of the forbidden 1940s polyamorous love triangle that launched the Wonder Woman comic book. Stars Luke Evans, Rebecca Hall, Bella Heathcote. Director Angela Robinson. IMDB 7.2; Metacritic 68. Rated R (8.3.6).Trailer: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r991pr4Fohk

**On this page is an example of a pretty good movie report that exemplifies what I am looking for.** (It covers a classic romantic film that most students have seen, but that is NOT one of your movie options.)

**Male strategies for displaying fitness, status, and sensitivity** in:

Pretty Woman

By Geoffrey Miller

In *Pretty Woman*, business tycoon Edward Lewis shows that in sexual courtship, people must use a wide range of both conventional and innovative self-presentation strategies to display their fitness indicators to best advantage. Edward’s main challenge is to combine his conventional, well-polished displays of competence and status with new tactics for appearing romantically likable. To demonstrate his status, it was sufficient for Edward to maintain the standard businessman image: dressing in Armani suits, being driven around in a white limo, and sponsoring charity polo games. He embodies all the status-projection strategies mentioned in class: displaying status artifacts (the Lotus Elise, the penthouse suite at the Regent Beverly Wilshire Hotel, the constant cell-phone calls, the business entourage), conspicuous consumption (buying Vivian elegant clothes, loaning her the $250,000 necklace, flying her to San Francisco on a private jet for an evening), basking in the reflected glory of being friends with a U.S. Senator, and demonstrating supreme confidence in his body language and facial expressions. Likewise, to demonstrate his physical courage and dominance, it was enough to face down Hollywood drug dealer Carlos and his thugs.

However, to become more likable, to demonstrate his kindness and sensitivity to Vivian as a potential good provider and good parent , Edward had to become much more innovative in his self-presentation, treading the fine line between overly obvious sensitivity-displays (which would have been hard to accept) and overly subtle signals (which might have gone unnoticed). For example, to overcome Vivian’s suspicion that he was a heartless profit-seeker, Edward had to stage a performance of his musical sensitivity – a late-night session of soulful piano-playing in the hotel lounge – hoping that Vivian would wander down and appreciate his virtuosity. Likewise, he has to convert an ostensibly status-oriented event – enjoying opening night at the opera from a private box – into a credible demonstration of his own musical romanticism, and of his sensitive mentorship of Vivian’s emerging taste for the good life.

Edward also had to combine his usual competence-displays with a new set of vulnerability-displays, including projecting modesty by admitting his incompetence with the Lotus Elise’s manual transmission, revealing troubled family dynamics by admitting his hatred of his recently deceased father, and emphasizing that both he and Vivian make their livings by “fucking people for money”. This psychological loosening-up is symbolized by Edward shedding his formal suits in favor of relaxed leisure wear for horse-riding and barefoot picnics.

Ultimately, to win Vivian’s heart, Edward must reject three major aspects of his previous life and learn to play new social roles with courage and panache. First, he must reject his persona as a business vulture who buys and breaks up companies with no compassion for their founders or workers, by keeping intact the company founded by aging ship-building magnate James Morse. Second, he must reject the associated habits and social relationships of that business-robot persona, overcoming Vivian’s fears about his workaholism by taking an unprecedented day off work, and her fears about the company he keeps by punching and firing his long-time lawyer friend Philip Stuckey after Stuckey tries to rape Vivian. Third, he must reject his self-image as a man “hopeless at relationships” – after a failed marriage and a recent break-up with his New York girlfriend – through making a grand romantic gesture for Vivian: climbing her fire escape despite his fear of heights, to deliver a bouquet of roses symbolic of his willingness to marry her. *Pretty Woman* offers hope that, like Edward, we can break free of our loneliness by breaking free of our habitual status-signalling strategies.

**Suggestions for writing the movie reports**

I’ve assigned movie reports in about 20 undergraduate lecture courses so far. Most students really like this kind of assignment, but they make some of the same mistakes over and over.

In each course, the most common **content** problems in movie reports have been:

* Too much plot summary. You should just mention characters, scenes, or plot developments briefly – specifically enough that we know which one you mean, but not in so much detail that you spend many sentences summarizing what happened. We’ve seen all these movies and know their plots inside and out; a plot summary doesn’t tell us anything we don’t already know, and they’re too easy to plagiarize from websites.
* Not enough reference to specific psychology ideas from readings and lectures – many students start with a good title and thesis statement, but then lose their focus halfway through the report, drifting off into plot summary or character evaluation.
* Inappropriate or ‘throwaway’ use of psychology terms without making it clear how they’re relevant to the movie or whether you really know what they mean. You can either define the term briefly, or use it properly in context, in a way that shows you clearly know what it means. For example, if you mention the term ‘operational sex ratio’, you could either define it briefly ‘(the ratio of males to females active in the mating market)’ or use it clearly, e.g. ‘a high operational sex ratio implies higher levels of male-male competition but also more female bargaining power’.
* Not enough supporting details from the movie to justify your claim that a particular psychology idea is relevant to some character, scene, or plot theme.
* Not enough specific behaviors by specific characters being mentioned to justify your generalizations. Note: in my one-page example analysis of Pretty Woman (see above), I included at least 25 specific examples of self-display tactics by the “Edward Lewis” character, whereas many students included only 3-5 specific details from their movies. (Of course, only a few of you will write movie reports about self-display tactics; this is just an example of a topic).

The most common **writing** problems have been:

* Title and thesis statement were too vague to keep your essay well-focused throughout
* Poor organization of ideas, without a clear, logical progression from one paragraph to the next.
* Misspelling character names, misidentifying characters, or failing to mention specific characters when they would be useful examples of some psychology point you’re making.
* Need to vary sentence length and structure more. Use a variety of sentence types to keep things interesting. You should have some 3 to 5 word sentences for emphasis, and maybe some that are much longer when you are conveying a complex idea.
* Too many run-on sentences that could be chopped up into shorter, stronger pieces.
* Failure to proof-read carefully, to check spelling, grammar, sentence structure.

**How to ace this course**

It should be easy to get a terrific grade in this class, if you attend class regularly, keep up with the readings, answer the quizzes thoughtfully, participate in class discussions, write and polish the movie reports on time, and think about what you are learning. If you read the assignments and listen closely to the lectures and peer discussions, you will probably do very well on the quizzes. If you watch the movies attentively and polish your rough drafts into good final versions, you will probably do very well on the movie reports. I love giving A’s to students who learn a lot and who think about their lives and relationships in new ways by learning evolutionary psychology.

On the other hand, if you treat this course as a soft option, you will do badly. If you skip lectures, fail to do your assigned readings, don’t take the quizzes seriously, don’t engage with class discussions, and do last-minute movie reports, you will get a disappointing grade. I am not at all afraid to give a C, D, or F to someone who deserves one. Nor can I be talked out of giving the appropriate grade by a last-minute email or appearance in my office hours.

You will get a lot of ongoing feedback in this course: about 13 attendance scores, about 13 quiz grades, and 3 movie report grades. These will all be available on UNM Learn within a few days after each class. If you find that you are coming to class and doing the work, but are not doing as well on these as you would wish, please email or see me or the TA to discuss how you can do better. We will be glad to help.

**This course's distinctive challenges**

**Warning 1: This course presents some striking new theories and data about sex, which is one of the most emotionally-charged, controversial areas of human behavior, culture, and morality**.

This course includes detailed lectures, readings, quizzes, discussions, and films about explicit topics. It covers not just consensual long-term heterosexual relationships, but also short-term affairs, infidelity, and jealousy; sexual harassment, stalking, coercion, and rape; sexual anatomy and physiology; masturbation, oral sex, and anal sex; sex in other species with strange mating systems; sex in other cultures that practice polygyny, polyandry, or sexual slavery; sexually-transmitted infections; pornography and prostitution; gay and lesbian sex; and unusual sexual preferences.

***If you are not open to learning about these topics in an open-minded, scientific way, this is not the right course for you.***

**Warning 2: This course views human sexuality in the context of evolutionary biology, animal behavior, sexual selection theory, and behavior genetics; the implications of this evolutionary-genetic perspective might conflict with some of your core religious or political beliefs**.

Evolutionary approaches to human sexuality are based on evolutionary biology, the fossil evidence for human evolution, our behavioral similarities to other primates, and other theories and facts. Its perspective and its implications can be hard to reconcile with belief in the literal truth of creation stories from the Old Testament, the Quran, the Hindu Upanishads, the Native American cultures, or other traditions. Whatever your religious beliefs, you’ll need to master and discuss the course material as it's presented.

This evolutionary perspective also challenges some common assumptions that human sexuality is a “blank slate” influenced mostly by parenting, culture, and media. If you have a strong gender feminist view that “all sex differences are socially constructed”, or a cultural relativist belief that “all sexual norms have equal moral validity”, you’ll face some interesting challenges reconciling the course content with your political beliefs.

**Warning 3: The suggested movies to watch and write reports on are mostly rated R; they include some fairly explicit sexual content**.

Most good adult dramas that portray human sexuality are rated R in the U.S. by the MPAA. Some of the movie choices also include fairly explicit sex, full frontal nudity, violence, bad language, drug use, etc. If you are especially sensitive about any topics, I recommend reading about each movie on the website kids-in-mind.com, which gives detailed descriptions of potentially offensive material in most movies. For example, if you have experienced a particular kind of trauma, such as rape or divorce, you may want to avoid movies that concern those topics.

*Bearing in mind these three warnings, I am happy to discuss in a mutually respectful way any of your concerns, and I will seek workable solutions that reconcile your right to religious and political freedom of belief, my right to academic freedom in teaching, and the university's need to maintain intellectual standards in teaching and grading*.

**Provisional Course Schedule: List of readings, assignments, and topics for each class**

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No readings required before the first class

1: Jan 17 **Introduction to the course**

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Before the second day of class:

Required readings (32 pp)

* Levay Ch. 1: Sexuality: pathways to understanding, p. 3-19 (16 pp)
* Meston & Buss, Introduction, pp. xi-xxii (12 pp)
* Max & Miller Introduction, pp. 3-6 (4 pp)
* This syllabus (carefully!)

Prepare for the first practice quiz at the beginning of this class, which will cover the information in this syllabus, and the reading.

2: Jan 24 **The science of sex**

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Required readings (38 pp)

* + - Max & Miller Ch. 4: Understand what women want … and why, pp. 69-78 (10 pp)
    - Max & Miller Ch. 10: Show them what you’re working with (Signaling Theory), pp. 165-172 (8 pp)
    - Levay Appendix A: Sex and evolution, pp. 551-570 (20 pp)

3: Jan 31 **Sexual evolution**

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Required readings (68 pp)

* Levay Ch. 5: section on attraction, pp. 124-137 (13 pp)
* Meston & Buss, Ch. 1: What turns women on? pp. 1-27 (27 pp)
* Max & Miller Ch. 11: The power of popularity and prestige (Social proof), pp. 173-185 (13 pp)
* Max & Miller Ch. 18: Talking to women, pp. 277-291 (15 pp)

4: Feb 7 **Sexual attraction**

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Required readings (60 pp)

* Meston & Buss, Ch. 2: The pleasure of it, pp. 28-49 (22 pp)
* Levay Ch. 5: sections on arousal and orgasm, pp.137-152, including box 5.2 (boxes 5.3 and 5.4 are optional) (15 pp)
* Levay Ch. 6 Sexual behavior pp. 156-187 (32 pp)

5: Feb 14 **Sexual behavior, pleasure, and orgasm**

**(Valentine’s Day!)**

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**Monday Feb 19:** **Movie Report 1 is due by midnight (upload on UNM Learn)**

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Required readings (65 pp)

* + Max & Miller Ch. 15: Find the right mating markets, pp. 231-246 (13 pp)
  + Meston & Buss, Ch. 4: The thrill of conquest, pp. 78-98 (21 pp)
  + Meston & Buss, Ch. 5: Green-eyed desire, pp. 99-116 (18 pp)

6: Feb 21 **Sexual competition and jealousy**

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Required readings (26 pp)

* Levay Ch. 2: section on the menstrual cycle, pp. 40(bottom)-44(bottom) (including box 2.4 on menstrual synchrony) (4 pp)
* Meston & Buss, Ch. 7: A sense of adventure, pp. 145-166 (22 pp)

7: Feb 28 **Sexual cycles: Ovulation, estrus, and variety-seeking**

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Required readings (66 pp)

* Max & Miller Ch. 9: The tender defender (The agreeable & assertive traits), pp. 148-161 (14 pp)
* Meston & Buss, Ch. 10: The dark side, pp. 211-235 (25 pp)
* Levay Ch. 16: Sexual assault, harassment, and partner violence 494-520 (27 pp)

8: March 7 **Sexual conflict: harassment, stalking, rape, alternative mating strategies**

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(March 14: No class; UNM Spring Break)

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Required readings (53 pp)

* Max & Miller Ch 2: Understand what it’s like to be a woman, pp. 30-49 (20 pp)
* Levay Ch. 7: Sex, gender, and transgender, pp. 88-120 (33 pp)

9: March 21 **Sex differences, gender, and transgender**

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Required readings (60 pp)

* Levay Ch. 12: Sexual orientation pp. 366-398 (33 pp)
* Levay Ch. 13: Atypical sexuality: pp. 402-429 (27 pp)

10: March 28 **Homosexuality and unusual sexual preferences**

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**Monday April 2:** **Movie Report 2 is due by midnight (upload on UNM Learn)**

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Required readings (60 pp)

* + Meston & Buss, Ch. 8: Barter and trade, pp. 167-190 (24 pp)
  + Max & Miller Ch. 12: How rich do you need to be? (Material proof), pp. 186-195 (10 pp)
  + Levay Ch. 17: Sex as a commodity, pp. 524-549 (26 p)

11: April 4 **Sexual barter, consumerist dating, and the sex industry**

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Required readings (48 pp)

* + Max & Miller Ch. 6: Get happy (The mental health trait), pp. 99-116 (18 pp)
  + Max & Miller Ch. 7: Smarten up (The intelligence trait), pp. 117-134 (17 pp)
  + Max & Miller Ch. 8: Get your life together (The willpower trait), pp. 135-147 (13 pp)

12: April 11 **Sexual attraction and the human mind**

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Required readings (69 pp)

* Meston & Buss, Ch. 3: The thing called love, pp. 50-77 (28 pp)
* Meston & Buss, Ch. 6: The call of duty, pp. 117-144 (28 pp)
* Max & Miller Ch. 14: Show her how you feel (Romantic proof), pp. 214-227 (13 pp)

13: April 18 **Romantic love, pair-bonding, and monogamy**

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Required readings (67 pp)

* Max & Miller Ch. 3: Clarify your mating goals and ethics, pp. 50-66 (17 pp)
* Levay Ch. 7: Sexual relationships pp. 192-223 (32 pp)
* Levay Ch. 13: sections on cohabitation, marriage, and divorce, pp. 336-353 (18 pp)

14: April 25 **Sexual morality, marriage, open relationships, and polyamory**

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15: May 2 **Last day of class: Discussion topics and readings to be decided by class**

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**Monday May 7:** **Movie Report 3 is due by midnight (upload on UNM Learn)**

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[May 7-11: UNM Final Exams – but no exam in this course]