PSYCH/WGSS 170 (03) Spring 2025

Psychology of Human Sexuality

Mondays & Thursdays 2:30pm-3:45pm | Hunter North Room 536
with Professor Carly Wolfer

Course Overview

Welcome to The Psychology of Human Sexuality! The goal of this course is to examine the complex interplay of psychological, sociocultural, and biological factors in the development and expression of sexual attitudes and behaviors. This will be accomplished through lectures, readings, discussions, exams, and some written assignments. We will cover a wide variety of topics, including the major psychological theories of sexuality, patterns of sexual arousal and response, the development of gender and gender identity, variations in sexual orientation, attraction processes and romantic love, sexual "dysfunctions" and sex therapy, and more. Every effort will be made to present each course topic in a way that is both significant, but also relevant and applicable to our own lives. By the end of the semester, you should have a greater understanding of your own and others' sexual functioning, relationships, and behaviors. You should also develop the ability to interpret and critique scientific research and modern media on sexuality.

Click here for course schedule and readings.

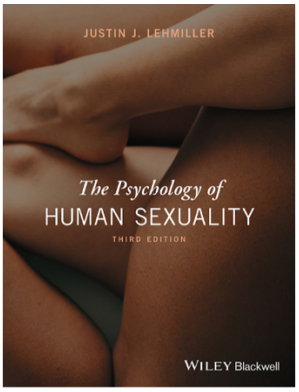
Prerequisites: PSYCH 10000

About Me



My name is: Carly Wolfer, MA (KAHR-lee wUlf-er)
Call me: Professor Wolfer (pronouns she/her/hers)
Email me at: cwolfer@gradcenter.cuny.edu (48 hour response time)
A little bit of background: I am a PhD candidate in the Basic & Applied Social Psychology Doctoral Program at The Graduate Center at CUNY. I have a Master's in Health Education & Behavior Sciences from Columbia University. I study sexual and romantic relationships, focusing on how interpersonal and socio-cultural factors (e.g., gender norms, sexual scripts,) support or stifle people's positive experiences of sex, relationships, and health.

Course Materials



Required Textbook: Lehmiller, J. J. (2023). *The Psychology of Human Sexuality (3rd Edition)*. Oxford, UK: Wiley.

Additional Readings: Any other required readings, podcasts, videos will be provided and linked on the Course Schedule.

Brightspace: Hunter has officially transitioned from Blackboard to Brightspace. All our course announcements and materials will be shared on Brightspace. Please ensure you have access throughout the semester. For a student set up guide to Brightspace, see here.

Lecture Slides: Slides will be available on Brightspace 24-48 hours after each class. Slides may not include all content you are responsible for, so completing required readings and taking notes in class is essential to fully grasp the material and prepare for assignments and exams.

Office Hours

What are office hours? Office hours (aka student hours) are optional, one-on-one meeting times between professors and students. Students can use office hours to discuss the course material, assignments, academic progress, professional development, career goals, and more. They are meant to be a safe space for students to seek support outside of class time. Notably, research finds that attending office hours is associated with better academic performance (Guerrero & Rod, 2013; McGrath, 2013).

Office hours will be held by appointment via Zoom. Please sign up for a 15-minute slot here: https://calendly.com/carlywolfer/office-hours.

- After scheduling, you will receive a calendar invite with the Zoom link available in the "location" details of the event.
- When scheduling, please add a note about what you would like to discuss so I can be prepared to support you.
- If you need to reschedule or cancel your appointment, please let me know at least 24 hours in advance, since I plan my day around these appointments.
- If none of the times shown work for your schedule, email me with other times you would like to meet, and I will try my best to accommodate.

Please join this Zoom link at your scheduled meeting time:
https://gc-cuny-edu.zoom.us/j/5915598574.

Learning Objectives

This is a small(er) lecture style class with ample opportunity for discussion, participation, and reflection. Learning takes effort, so my hope is that we all put in the appropriate time and energy to make the class worthwhile for ourselves and our peers. My goal is for students to learn and critically think about sexuality-related issues in research and society.

By the end of this course, you will be able to…		
UNDERSTAND major theories, scientific methods, and research findings in the field of the psychology of sexuality.	***APPLY*** theories and research in the psychology of sexuality to real-world examples (e.g., media).	***EXAMINE*** sexuality-related issues that impact health and wellbeing for individuals, relationships, and society.

The theories and principles that shape this course include…	
A BIO-PSYCH-SOCIAL PERSPECTIVE,	***SEX POSITIVITY,***

which recognizes that sexual behavior, health, and relationships are shaped by a dynamic combination of biological, psychological, evolutionary and social-cultural influences.	which emphasizes that people should have space to safely embody, explore, and learn about their sexuality, gender, health, body, and relationships without judgment or shame.

Course Requirements

Readings



Prior to each class period, you will be responsible for 1) reading a textbook chapter and/or 2) reading, listening to, or watching the material listed and linked on the Course Schedule. Besides the textbook, these readings may include empirical articles, popular media articles, TEDTalks, or podcasts. Your exams, in-class activities, and media project cover content from these materials, whether or not we have a chance to discuss them during the lecture.

Engagement (aka Attendance & Participation) **75 points**



Your attendance and participation are required. You will be asked to complete a brief activity or reflection during each class period. Each engagement activity is worth 3 points. You will not receive credit if you are late to class and miss an activity. You get 2 "freebies" (6 points), so you can miss up to 2 classes and still earn all engagement points. If you attend all classes and complete all engagement activities, your 6 "freebie" points will be applied as extra credit to your final grade. See extra credit opportunities below for more information.

Exams **150 points**



There will be 4 in-person, non-cumulative exams (50 points each). Expect multiple choice, fill in the blank, and short answer questions that draw on material from class lectures and discussions, videos, textbook, and supplemental materials. Some questions will ask you to apply a concept/term/theory to a hypothetical scenario or phenomenon. I am unable to offer make-up exams, so please ensure you attend classes on exam days. I will drop your lowest exam grade. If you miss (or choose not to take) an exam, it can be your "dropped" exam. If you take all exams, I will automatically count your top 3 scores. 3 of the exams will be administered during normal class time, and 1 of the exams will be administered during the final exam period. I provide a study guide for each exam, which includes key terms, concepts, and "critical thinking questions" that the exam may cover.

Media Project **75 points**



You will be asked to complete a final project where you apply course theories, concepts, and research to modern media about human sexuality. Choose from **one** of the following prompts:

1. *Letter to the Editor*: Write a 3-4 page double-spaced essay where you select and correct a piece of modern media (article, movie/TV show scene, book, podcast, Tik Tok) that misrepresents something about human sexuality.
2. *Content Creation*: Create 2 Tik Toks (or reels or Youtube shorts) educating the public about human sexuality related topic(s) of your choosing, accompanied by brief captions for each video and a 2 page double-spaced essay where you describe your intended audience, the research/theories/sources you used, and how/why you chose to focus on those course concepts for your intended

audience. You may work in pairs (i.e., groups of 2) for this option, in which case you will be asked to create 4 Tik Toks.

Detailed instructions and rubrics will be reviewed in class and posted on Brightspace.

Total Required Points	**300 points**

Extra Credit Opportunities

You will be presented with several extra opportunities throughout the semester that you can take advantage of to boost your grade, especially if you feel like exams or attendance are more difficult for you. Extra credit opportunities include:

Engagement	**+ 6 points**
	You get 2 "freebies" (6 points) under attendance/participation, so you can miss 2 classes and still earn all engagement points. If you attend all classes and complete all engagement activities, your 6 points from your 2 "freebies" will be applied as extra credit to your final grade.
Exams	**+ 24 points**
	Each exam will contain 2-4 extra credit questions that can earn you an additional 6 points on each exam. This means that you can earn back a total of 24 exam points on each exam (or 18 after your lowest exam grade gets dropped).
Vulva Drawing Content	**+ 3 points**
	You will have an opportunity to enter a "Vulva Drawing Contest" which involves submitting a hand-drawn, accurately labeled Vulva. The class will vote on the winner of the contest. Anyone who enters an accurate/complete drawing into the contest automatically earns 1 point extra credit. The winner of the contest earns bragging rights and 3 points extra credit.
"All Things Interesting"	**+ 2 points**
	One of the most exciting parts of psychology is that it's incredibly relevant to our day-to-day lives. I often find myself reading articles/listening to podcasts/hearing music that relates to the concepts we talk about in class. As an extra credit opportunity this semester, you will be able to submit a piece of media (e.g. an article, podcast, show, TikTok, etc.) that connects to the concepts we discuss in class. The media should be recent (i.e., published/posted in 2024 or 2025). Along with a link to the piece of media, please submit a paragraph describing the class concept this piece demonstrates and how it connects to the material we've learned in class. You may submit this any time between Feb 3rd, and May 15th.
Student Eval Surveys	**+ 4 points**
	You will be invited to complete 2 student surveys throughout the semester, where you can earn up to 4 points extra credit. These surveys are designed to gather course feedback, opinions, suggestions, and questions from students in an anonymous forum. Your honest and thoughtful responses will help me improve this course and others in the future. The first survey (worth 2 points extra credit) will be available in the middle of the semester. The second survey is the Hunter Course/Teacher Eval, available at the end of the semester. If at least 80% of the class completes it, *everyone* will get 2 points extra credit.

Total Extra Credit Points Available	39 points

Grading

A successful student in this course will:

1. Be present (and on-time) for all classes, and come prepared to take notes and participate in discussions and activities.
2. Complete weekly readings prior to class and take notes as you read.
3. Check Brightspace and your email for weekly course materials and updates.
4. Attend office hours to get support or guidance as needed.
5. Be curious, open, and thoughtful!
6. Complete all following course requirements by their due date:

	Course Requirement	Possible Points	Percentage of Total Grade
	Engagement	75	25%
	Exams	150	50%
	Media Project	75	25%
	Total Course Points:	**300**	**100%**
	Extra Credit)	39	+ 13%

Your total score in the class will be the sum of all of the points you have earned on the course requirements listed above. You can earn a total of 300 points plus up to 15 points of extra credit. Your earned points will be divided by 300 to create a percentage. The percentage will be assigned a corresponding letter grade based on the Hunter College rubric. See below for a breakdown of the points, percentages, and corresponding rubric.

Grade	Points Earned	Percentage	GPA
A+	292.5 – 300+	97.5 – 100+%	4.0
A	277.5 – 292	92.5 – 97.4%	4.0
A-	270 – 277	90.0 – 92.4%	3.7
B+	262.5 – 269.5	87.5 – 89.9%	3.3
B	247.5 – 262	82.5 – 87.4%	3.0
B-	240 – 247	80.0 – 82.4%	2.7
C+	232.5 – 239.5	77.5 – 79.9%	2.3
C	210 – 232	70.0 – 77.4%	2.0
D	180 – 209.5	60.0 – 69.9%	1.0
F	0 – 177	0 – 59%	0.0

Course Policies

Late Work: Recognizing that sometimes life gets in the way of deadlines, I am able to accept work up to 1 week late for credit. After 1 week, the grade on your assignment will drop by 3% each day (e.g., if

an assignment was due on a Sunday, and is turned in on Monday of the following week, I will deduct 3% of points earned on that assignment. There is no need to email me if you plan to submit something late. However, you may receive an email from me once 1 week has passed to ensure that you are aware that you have missed the assignment and that you are losing credit. All course work must be submitted by Friday, May 23rd at 11:59pm, or I will not be able to grade it by Hunter's grade submission deadline.

Research not "me-search": This is an empirically-based course, such that everything we talk about is grounded in scientific research, not "me-search." Although you may already be familiar with or have personal experience with some of the terminology and concepts we will discuss, that is not enough to ace the course, and any personal experiences or opinion should be grounded in research and theory. This is not to say that personal experiences are unimportant and can never be shared in a class of this nature; rather, it is just that the primary emphasis will be on the science, not people's personal opinions or experiences. Additionally, students frequently underestimate the difficulty of human sexuality classes because of the nature of the topic and are often surprised when they do not do as well as they thought they would. This course may be among the most fun and entertaining classes you ever take, but you should treat it just as you would any other science class in terms of the amount of time and resources you devote to preparing for classes and understanding the material.

Technology: Students who actively engage in class discussions and activities earn higher grades than those who attend class but are texting or on the Internet. While laptops and cell phones can be used to take notes and participate in class activities, personal use of devices in class is discouraged. I will be enabling "do not disturb" on my devices, and I encourage you to do the same. You will receive a warning via email the first time I find you distracting your peers with any devices during class, and any subsequent digital distraction will result in you losing that day's engagement points (-3 points).

Contacting the Instructor: The quickest way to contact the instructor is via email. Up to two *business* days will be needed for a response to email inquiries. You can follow up if I have not responded after three business days, but please do not prompt me within the two-day window. I cannot guarantee that I will respond to last-minute questions about exams or assignments, so please plan ahead! Students are welcome to exchange contact information with each other as an additional resource.

Letters of Recommendation: Students often need references or letters of recommendation (LOR) from professors, supervisors, or mentors when applying to jobs, internships, or graduate school. When application committees are reading letters, they are looking for information that shows the recommender knows the student well, and has familiarity in a context other than the classroom. They will be looking to see if the recommender can comment specifically, and with familiarity, on your skills, abilities, and experience that are required for the type of graduate program or job to which you're seeking admittance. It is strongly advised that students do the following when requesting LORs from professors: 1) Establish rapport with the professor outside of class time; 2) Communicate with the professor via email or in person at least 1 month in advance of the submission deadline to tell them about the position/program you are interested in, and to graciously ask them for a LOR by the specified date; 3) Send the professor your resume or CV, personal statement or cover letter, and any relevant information about the program/job you are applying for; 4) Schedule a meeting with the professor at least 1 month in advance of the submission deadline. Only after the progressor agrees should you submit their name and email as a reference/letter writer. While it is never guaranteed that a professor will accept your LOR request, following these guidelines will make it more likely that they will agree to write your LOR.

Academic Integrity: Hunter College regards acts of academic dishonesty (e.g., plagiarism, cheating on examinations, obtaining unfair advantage, and falsification of records and official documents) as serious offenses against the values of intellectual honesty. The College is committed to enforcing the CUNY Policy on Academic Integrity and will pursue cases of academic dishonesty according to the Hunter College Academic Integrity Procedures.

> **AI Software**: The use of generative AI software (e.g., ChatGPT) to complete or write your assignments is considered academic dishonesty and will not be tolerated. All assignments will be screened by software that detects the use of AI-generated content. All written assignments should entirely be the product of the individual student's own work. If the instructor finds that this policy is violated, students will be reported.

Accessibility: I am happy to support students in my class with accommodations. It is recommended that all students with documented disabilities (Emotional, Medical, Physical and/ or Learning) consult the Office of AccessABILITY located in Room E1124 to secure necessary academic accommodations. In compliance with the American Disability Act of 1990 (ADA) and with Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Hunter College is committed to ensuring educational parity and accommodations for all students with documented disabilities and/or medical conditions. For further information and assistance please call (212- 772- 4857)/TTY (212- 650- 3230).

Sexual Misconduct: In compliance CUNY's Policy on Sexual Misconduct, Hunter College prohibits any sexual misconduct, which includes sexual violence, harassment, and gender-based harassment retaliation against students, employees, or visitors, as well as certain intimate relationships. Students who have experienced any form of sexual violence on or off campus (including CUNY-sponsored trips and events) are entitled to the rights outlined in the Bill of Rights for Hunter College.

Sexual Violence: Students are strongly encouraged to immediately report the incident by calling 911, contacting NYPD Special Victims Division Hotline (646-610-7272) or their local police precinct, or contacting the College's Public Safety Office (212-772-4444).

All Other Forms of Sexual Misconduct: Students are encouraged to contact the College's Title IX Campus Coordinator, Dean John Rose (jtrose@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-650-3262) or Colleen Barry (colleen.barry@hunter.cuny.edu or 212-772-4534) and seek complimentary services through the Counseling and Wellness Services Office, Hunter East 1123. CUNY Policy on Sexual Misconduct http://www.hunter.cuny.edu/diversityandcompliance/repository/files/cuny-policy-on-sexual-misconduct.pdf.

(Additional **community resources** including laptop loans, counseling, food and housing services can be found via this link, which is also posted on Brightspace).

Community Norms

My goal is to create a learning environment that promotes diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, and belonging (DEIJB). Each of us belongs here and deserves to feel as though your experiences and needs are reflected in the course. To do this, I promise to uphold the following values:

- **Transparency in Grading:** I will provide clear expectations and rubrics for course assignments; I will try my best to grade assignments within 1 week of submission, and I will keep your overall grade up to date. (Writing assignments may take me closer to 2 weeks to grade).

- **Representative and Intersectional Course Content**: I will critically reflect on all course content and make adjustments to ensure lecture, research, readings, and discussions represent intersectional and diverse experiences.
- **Safe and Open-Minded Discussions**: I will cultivate a safe, non-judgmental space for both early and fully formed thoughts and questions, so everyone feels they have a voice. I will work to promote diverse ideas—as long as those ideas uphold respect and safety for our community.
- **Accessibility and Support**: I will make myself available via email, during class time, and during office hours to support your educational and professional needs and goals. I will also support you by connecting you with any other support/resources (i.e., housing, disability, food/basic needs, mental health services, etc.).
- **Formative Evaluation:** I will administer anonymous check in surveys throughout the semester for students to send in confidential course feedback and questions. I will genuinely review each of your responses and integrate your feedback to improve the course experience. I will evaluate our course progress, not only by reflecting on students' individual-level progress, but also my own opportunities for growth as an instructor.

In return, I ask that you please uphold our community norms by:

- Thoughtfully engaging with the course readings and materials
- Being an active listener and participant in class discussion and activities
- Respecting me and your classmates' experiences by perspective-taking, leading with compassion, and reflecting on how our identities our shape thoughts, feelings, and behaviors
- Respecting my and your classmates' time by submitting assignments and arriving to class on time.

Are there any other community values or norms you'd like to propose? Let me know via email (cwolfer@gradcenter.cuny.edu) or the start of semester survey that will be available to you during Week 1 of class.