2014

CLAS 236-01 Gender and Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome

Alexander Hall

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CLAS 236-01: Gender and Sexuality in Ancient Greece and Rome
TR 8:30-9:45, TBD
3.0 Credit-hours

Instructor: Dr. Alexander Hall (hallae@xavier.edu, 513-745-1931)
Office hours (in Schott Hall, 903): M 3-4:30, TR 10-11, WF 1-2, (online) W 9-10 PM

Required Texts
Sexuality in Greek and Roman Society and Literature: A Sourcebook. Marguerite Johnson and Terry Ryan.
Plato Symposium
Three plays of Aristophanes
Other Primary and Secondary Readings on Canvas.

Description
In this class, we will explore two distinct but interrelated questions: what did people in the ancient world think it meant to be a woman or a man, especially in the realm of sexual behavior? And, what was it actually like? To find answers, we will read a wide variety of texts (literary, philosophical, historical, inscriptional, and even personal) and examine the evidence of material culture.

Don’t let the words “read” and “examine” trick you into thinking this will be a passive exercise, however. The materials we are dealing with will make their points in subtle ways, and even those that seem to lay out very clear rules will turn out to be less trustworthy than we might like. As such you, the student, will be called on not only to read but to think, question, analyze, and judge the works you encounter.

As a result, you will leave this course not only knowing something about views on gender and sexuality in the ancient world, views which influence our thinking today, but also with the skills to examine carefully how societies in general construct and express expectations about gender and sexuality, and how those expectations play out in everyday life.

This course satisfies the University Diversity Core Requirement and offers Gender and Diversity Studies credit, because of both the material covered and the methods employed in its study. The work of the class will be the analysis of the experience of individuals and groups in the ancient world as defined by their gender and sexual orientation (and, peripherally, their age, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status). And, since the study of the ancient world always requires a leap of imagination, understanding people long dead through textual and physical remains, the ways of thinking employed in the course will help students to attain that principal objective of diversity education: understanding what it is like to be someone different from themselves.

Objectives
By the end of this course you will be able to: 

- Demonstrate knowledge of Graeco-Roman ideas about gender roles and sexual activity, with a particular emphasis on how these ideas influence thinking today.
- Read texts closely and deeply, pushing beyond the level of surface meaning to extract implicit meaning and subtext.
- Evaluate the impact of context as part of reading, through sensitivity both to how the meaning of individual passages is shaped by the meaning of the work as a whole, and to how the meaning of passages and works is conditioned by their historical context.
- Compare and contrast cultural ideals of behavior with the practices that actually existed.
- Undertake research on a topic related to gender and sexuality, employing both primary and secondary sources.
- Construct and defend an argument on the basis of that research that contributes to scholarly discussion on the topic.

**Daily Activities**

Before each class meeting, students will submit (via the course website) brief responses to a prompt about the day’s reading. These will serve as the starting point to discussion, which will take up the bulk of most meetings. Depending on the day, this may be a free-wheeling conversation involving the whole class, or one undertaken in smaller groups on a variety of topics, or a combination of both. On about a weekly basis, in-class creative assignments (e.g. a dramatic reading of part of a text, bringing in a modern text or object relevant to the topic, etc.) will take the place of discussion. Each student will be required to participate in one of these in-class assignments at least twice over the course of the semester (see below). Class will usually conclude with a brief lecture providing background information for next class’ assignment, and the discussion prompt to be answered.

**Grading**

Exams: 2 x 20% = 40% (A combination of multiple choice, source-based questions, short answer, and essay).

Attendance and Participation: 20% (Includes at least 2 in-class presentations)

Reflection Paper: 10% (An exploration of your thoughts on the class topic, to help choose a research paper topic).

Annotated Bibliography: 10% (Compiled on the topic identified in the reflection paper).

Research Paper: 20% (8-10 pages, constructing an argument using the sources in the annotated bibliography).

The Departmental grading scale is:

A: 100-95  B+: 92-91  C+: 84-83  D+: 76-75  F: <69
A-: 94-93  B: 90-87  C: 82-79  D: 74-72
B-: 86-85  C-: 78-77  D-: 71-70

**Course Policies**

1 If you have attended and participated in class and completed readings and assignments.
ATTENDANCE: Attendance and active participation are essential for the successful completion of this course, and as such are strongly (and ruthlessly) incentivized. Every unexcused absence lowers your attendance grade by 5 points, and thus your final grade by 1. If you somehow miss more than 20 classes (and thus are already receiving a 0 for attendance), you will still be docked points at the rate of 1 final grade point / missed class.

Absences may be excused for personal, medical, religious, or co-curricular reasons at the instructor’s discretion if you contact me AT LEAST 24 hours in advance or after the fact in the case of a true (and documentable) emergency. We will discuss the rescheduling of graded activities when you contact me. Graded activities missed due to an unexcused absence cannot be made up, and you will receive a grade of 0.

Whether excused or not, students are still responsible for any material covered on the days they miss. Plan to get notes from a friend, and consult the course website for any handouts or similar materials that may have been distributed.

Two other activities fall under the heading of “attendance and participation”: responses to discussion questions and in-class presentations. You are not fully present unless you have submitted an answer to the day’s discussion question. Failure to do so means the loss of 2.5 attendance points (half a final grade point) even if you come to class. In-class presentations will be graded on a complete / incomplete basis. If you fail to complete one, you will receive a 0 for attendance and participation. If you only complete 1, you will receive no more than a 50. Only by completing at least 2 in-class presentations (of differing types) will you be able to receive 100% on attendance and participation (assuming you have, indeed, attended and participated).

DECORUM: To create and preserve an environment where all are able to learn, students are expected to observe a minimal level of decorum in the classroom. Those who do not will be instructed to leave and marked as absent for the day. Violations of decorum include but are not limited to: disrespectful or abusive treatment of other students or of the instructor; disruptive use of technology (texting, facebooking, or talking on the phone in class); preparing assignments for other classes during class time.

COMMUNICATION: The best ways to communicate with the instructor outside class are face-to-face or via email. Please drop by any time, especially but not exclusively during posted office hours. I have included my office phone on the syllabus, which you may use to call during non-posted hours to see if I’m in (I sometimes am). Otherwise, email communication is preferred. I will always answer an email I receive by the beginning of the next posted office hour after it was sent.

Email and the course website will also be the ways I will get in touch with you outside class. Extra readings and any materials distributed during class will usually be posted on the course website afterwards. Announcements relating to the class will be made there (and distributed by email), so check in frequently. I will also keep an online grade book there, which should be your first destination for questions you have about your grades.
A discussion forum is enabled on the website to facilitate discussion among students.

ACCOMMODATION: Any student who feels s/he may need an accommodation based on the impact of a documented disability (including learning disabilities) should contact the Learning Assistance Center at 513-745-3280 on the Fifth Floor of the Conaton Learning Commons, Room 514, to coordinate reasonable accommodations.

ACADEMIC HONESTY: The following is excerpted from the Student Handbook, and thus applies not only to this class but University wide: “The pursuit of truth demands high standards of personal honesty. Academic and professional life requires a trust based upon integrity of the written and spoken word. Accordingly, violations of certain standards of ethical behavior will not be tolerated at Xavier University. These include theft, cheating, plagiarism, unauthorized assistance in assignments and tests, unauthorized copying of computer software, the falsification of results and material submitted in reports or admission and registration documents, and the falsification of any academic record including letters of recommendation.

“All work submitted for academic evaluation must be the student’s own. Certainly, the activities of other scholars will influence all students. However, the direct and unattributed use of another’s efforts is prohibited as is the use of any work untruthfully submitted as one’s own.

“Penalties for violations of this policy may include one or more of the following: a zero for that assignment or test, an “F” in the course, and expulsion from the University. The dean of the college in which the student is enrolled is to be informed in writing of all such incidents, though the teacher has full authority to assign the grade for the assignment, test, or course. If disputes of interpretation arise, the student, faculty member, and chair should attempt to resolve the difficulty. If this is unsatisfactory, the dean will rule in the matter. As a final appeal, the academic vice president will call a committee of tenured faculty for the purpose of making a final determination.”

HARASSMENT: The following is excerpted from the Student Handbook, and thus applies not only to this class but University wide: “Harassment is the creation of a hostile or intimidating environment, in which conduct, because of its severity and/or persistence, is likely to interfere significantly with an individual’s life by affecting the person physically or emotionally. Harassment will not be tolerated.

“Individuals who believe they have been harassed, individuals charged with harassment, and individuals with knowledge of situations in which harassment may exist should consult the Xavier University Harassment Code and Accountability Procedures (HCAP). All students are responsible and expected to know and follow the HCAP. Any student violation of the HCAP is also a violation of the Standards of Student Conduct. The full HCAP can be found at www.xavier.edu/hr/docs/employees/harassmentcode.pdf.”

One concluding word: the content of this course will include frank discussions of sex acts, of the anatomy and physiology of sexual difference, and of prejudice (particularly misogyny) of a quite extreme type. If these topics make you uncomfortable, or if you do not think you will be able to discuss them in a mature fashion, this may not be the class for you.

Tentative Schedule
Unit 1: Pleasure and Companionship
1/14 - Introduction
1/16 - Symposium 1

1/21 - Symposium 2, ("Platonic Love and Colorado Law")
1/23 - Against Neaera 1

1/28 - Against Neaera 2, Aspasia, ("The Making of a Prostitute")
1/30 - Mimnermus, Theognis, etc.

2/4 - Sappho, ("Sappho Schoolmistress")
2/6 - Selections from Roman Elegy

2/11 - Ars Amatoria, ("Gender Identity and the Elegiac Hero")
2/13 - (sourcebook), selections from Lucretius

**Unit 2: Sex and the Body**
2/18 - Medical writers (sourcebook)
2/20 - Sex acts (sourcebook), ("The Greek Medical Texts and the Sexual Ethos of Ancient Athens")

2/25 - Prostitution (sourcebook)
2/27 - EXAM

3/4 - SPRING BREAK
3/6 - SPRING BREAK

3/11 - Selections from the Metamorphoses, Catullus 63, REFLECTION PAPER DUE
3/13 - Athena, Artemis, and Hestia

**Unit 3: Marriage and Commitment**
3/18 - Library Instruction Day
3/20 - Oeconimicus 1

3/25 - Oeconimicus 2, (Pomeroy?)
3/27 - Advice to the Bride and Groom, Marriage law (sourcebook)

4/1 - Hesiod and Semonides
4/3 - Laudatio Turiae, epitaphs, (secondary TBD)

4/8 - Weddings (sourcebook), ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY DUE
4/10 - Epithalamia

4/15 - Daughters of Asopus, Cologne Epode, (Gerber on Archilochus)
4/17 - EASTER BREAK

4/22 - Committed gay relationships (sourcebook)
4/24 - Assemblywomen
4/29 - Lysistrata
5/1 - RESEARCH PAPER DUE, Review

Final Exam: 5/6