

Ethics and Politics of Sex (YHU2269)

M R 13:00-14:30, Classroom 13

Instructor: Prof. Robin Zheng

Contact information

email: robin.zheng@yale-nus.edu.sg

website: on Canvas, via <http://yale-nus.instructure.com/>

office hours: MT 14:30-15:30 (Cendana RC3-02-05D)

to book an appointment, visit: <https://calendly.com/prof-zheng>

Please don't hesitate to contact me; I am here for you and happy to help however I can. However, note that I do **not** respond instantaneously to emails, especially on evenings and weekends, so make sure to allow yourself plenty of time to get in touch.

Course description

In this course we consider the moral and political dimensions of sex by focusing on sex understood as individual and social practice. Are sexual preferences, fantasies, behaviors, and traditions morally criticizable at all? What about sexual industries and institutions? In what ways do our sexual practices impede or advance the struggle for social justice?

Course requirements

Discussion	20%	(10% participation, 10% moderation)
Annotations	10%	by <u>noon</u> the day before class
Small group reflections	10%	11:59p on Fridays (Weeks 2-13)
First paper	20%	11:59p, Friday, 8 September
Final paper	25%	11:59p, Friday, 17 November
M(oral) history project	15%	TBA

Attendance is mandatory, because participating in discussion is a crucial part of your and your classmates' learning. If you must miss class for a personal emergency or for a university-sanctioned event, please write me in advance to obtain an excuse. An inordinate record of unexcused absences is enough to fail the class.

Readings

All texts should be read *in advance* of the lecture, and are available through E-Reserves on Canvas.

Papers

First paper: 5 pp, due 11:59p, Friday, 8 September

Final paper: 8-10 pp, due 11:59p, Friday, 17 November

All papers should be submitted via Canvas. Do not put your name anywhere in the paper! Save the document using a title that includes your student ID and the number of the question you're answering. E.g. "63489001_Question5.docx". You do not need a cover page. Do not use any nonstandard fonts or formatting. Please number all your pages.

Writing a good paper is in some ways like writing any other good paper, but there are certain standards and demands that are particular to philosophy. I will not read drafts of your papers, but I am happy to look over outlines and talk through your ideas. To get feedback on drafts, you may want to make an appointment at the Writers' Centre: <https://writerscentre.yale-nus.edu.sg/>.

Note: Detailed instructions will be distributed closer to deadline.

Annotations

You will be asked to annotate the text as a class every week using Perusall (via Canvas). Annotations are due by **noon every Monday and Wednesday**, i.e. the day before class.

Here are some potential ways you could annotate the text:

Question: Ask a question about something you read in the text. It could be clarificatory (e.g. What is an example of X? What does Philosopher mean when she says X?), extrapolative (e.g. How does this apply to X? What does this view on X tell us about Y?), or critical (e.g. Oh yeah? So what?).

Quote: Highlight one claim, phrase, or passage in the text that struck you as being particularly significant AND explain what you think is its significance. It could be surprising, counterintuitive, dubious, spurious, insightful, illuminating, provocative, compelling, ...

Criticize: Identify something you disagree with in the text AND give a reason why. This could include providing a counterexample, demonstrating that a conclusion doesn't follow, or pointing out a false premise.

Small Group Reflections

Starting in Week 2, you will be asked (in groups of 3) to meet outside of class once a week for small-group discussions relating the course material to your personal lives. The time and place is up to you, but it is recommended that you meet for at least 30-45 minutes. Each week, one member of your group should write a brief (300-500 words) summary of the insights gained from the discussion, for a total of 4 per person throughout the term.

Discussion

The participation grade will consist of your contributions to class discussion and your time spent in office hours. A steady record of high or low participation can make a difference when it comes to borderline grades.

Each of you will (in pairs) moderate one class discussion. You will be expected to identify the main arguments of the text, generate discussion questions, and bring in any material (e.g. make a presentation, show a video, pass around a new article) that is relevant.

M(oral) History Project

You will be asked to interview several persons in your community (broadly construed) about one of the topics discussed in the course, to present your interviewees' opinions in the context of the views we have studied, and to critically evaluate those opinions.

Note: Detailed instructions will be distributed closer to deadline.

Late Policy

Late papers will be marked down 1/3 of a letter grade for the first day they are late (e.g., A- to B+), and by 2/3 of a letter grade for each subsequent day (e.g., B+ to B-).

Annotations and small group discussions will not be accepted late.

Access and Inclusion

If you have any physical, psychiatric or learning conditions that may impact your performance in this course, please let me know as soon as possible, so that we may arrange for the appropriate accommodations.

If you observe any religious or cultural practices that may interfere with this course, please also let me know.

The College is committed to providing a safe and inclusive learning environment for all community members regardless of race, religion, nationality, culture, gender identity, sexual orientation, and socio-economic class. If you or someone you know has been subject to bias, discrimination, sexual harassment, misconduct, or assault in or outside class, I encourage you to follow up with one or more of these authorities as appropriate: me (YHU2269), your faculty advisor, or your Vice Rector.

Academic Integrity

I will hold you to the highest standards of academic integrity. The library provides examples, tips, and resources on plagiarism at <http://library.yale-nus.edu.sg/plagiarism/>. If I suspect any kind of academic dishonesty, I will not hesitate to report you to the Academic Disciplinary Committee. If you are in any way unclear as to what constitutes plagiarism, come talk to me before you write your papers. Ignorance or confusion will not be accepted as excuses for plagiarism or other academic misconduct.

Health and Wellness

If you are experiencing undue stress or feel you might benefit from private counseling, please contact the Yale-NUS Health and Wellness Center. You may also wish to reach out to Vice Rector within your residential College. For this and other kinds of support, visit <https://studentlife.yale-nus.edu.sg/wellness/>.

Schedule of Readings

Week	Topic	Day	Text(s)
1	Sexual Preferences: Beauty	M	Ted Chiang, "Liking What You See," in <i>Stories of Your Life and Others</i> (New York: Vintage Books, 2016), 237-274. (Optional) Naomi Wolf, "The Beauty Myth," in <i>The Beauty Myth</i> (New York: HarperCollins, 2002): 9-19.
		R	Sheila Lintott and Sherri Irvin, "Sex Objects and Sexy Subjects: A Feminist Reclamation of Sexiness," in <i>Body Aesthetics</i> (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016): 299-318.
2	Sexual Preferences: Race	M	Nathaniel A.T. Coleman, "What? What? In the (Black) Butt," <i>APA Newsletters: Newsletter on Philosophy and Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Issues</i> 11:1 (Fall 2011): 12-15 Robin Zheng, "Why Yellow Fever Isn't Flattering: A Case Against Racial Fetish," <i>The Journal of the American Philosophical Association</i> , 2:3 (2016): 400-419.
		R	Charles Mills, "Do Black Men Have a Moral Duty to Marry Black Women?" <i>Journal of Social Philosophy</i> 25:1 (June 1994): 131-153.
3	Sexual Violence: Myths	M	Lois Pineau, "Date Rape: A Feminist Analysis," <i>Law and Philosophy</i> 8:2 (August 1989): 217-243. Robin West, "The Harms of Consensual Sex," in <i>The Philosophy of Sex: Contemporary Readings, 5th Edition</i> (Washington D.C.: Rowman & Littlefield): 317-324.
		R	A. Leah Vickers and Phillip Kitcher, "Pop Sociobiology Reborn: The Evolutionary Psychology of Sex and Violence" in <i>Evolution, Gender, and Rape</i> (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2003): 139-168.
4	Sexual Violence: Rape Culture	M	Carol J. Adams, "I Just Raped My Wife! What Are You Going to Do About It, Pastor?": The Church and Sexual Violence," in <i>Transforming a Rape Culture</i> (Minneapolis, MN: Milkweed Editions, 1993): 57-86.
		R	Celia Kitzinger, "Problematizing Pleasure: Radical Feminist Deconstructions of Sexuality and Power" in <i>Power/Gender: Social Relations in Theory and Practice</i> (New York: SAGE, 1994):194-209.

			bell hooks, "Seduced by Violence No More" in <i>Outlaw Culture: Resisting Representations</i> (New York: Routledge, 1994): 109-113.
5	Pornography: Criticisms	M	Catharine Mackinnon, "Francis Biddle's Sister: Pornography, Civil Rights, and Speech," in <i>Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law</i> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987): 163-197.
		R	Rae Langton, "Speech Acts and Unspeakable Acts," <i>Philosophy and Public Affairs</i> 22:4 (Autumn 1993): 293-330.
6	Pornography: Complications	M	Anne Eaton, "A Sensible Antiporn Feminism," <i>Ethics</i> 117 (July 2007): 674-715.
		R	Mireille Miller-Young, "(Black) Porn Star" in <i>A Taste for Brown Sugar</i> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014): 180-225.
7	<i>No readings</i>		
8	Prostitution	M	Martha Nussbaum, "Whether from Reason or Prejudice": Taking Money for Bodily Services," <i>The Journal of Legal Studies</i> 27:2 (1998): 693-723.
		R	Laurie Shrage, "Should Feminists Oppose Prostitution?" <i>Ethics</i> 99.2 (1989): 347-361.
9	Sex and Gender	M	John Stoltenberg, "How Men Have A Sex" in <i>Refusing to be a Man: Essays on Sex and Justice</i> (London: UCL Press, 1989): 18-31. (Optional) Sally Haslanger, "Gender and Race: (What) are they? (What) do we want them to be?," <i>Nous</i> 34:1 (2000): 31-55.
		R	Kate Bornstein, "Naming All the Parts" in <i>Gender Outlaw: On Men, Women, and the Rest of Us</i> (New York, Routledge, 1995): 21-40.
10	Sex and Gender	M	Talia Mae Bettcher, "Appearance, Reality, and Gender Deception: Reflections on Transphobic Violence and the Politics of Pretence" in <i>Violence, Victims, Justifications: Philosophical Approaches</i> , ed. Felix Ó Murchadha (New York, Peter Lang, 2006): 175-200.

		R	Alexa Schriempf, "(Re)fusing the Amputated Body: An Interactionist Bridge for Feminism and Disability," <i>Hypatia</i> 16.4 (2001): 53-79.
11	Sexual Fantasy	M	Sandra Bartky, "Feminine Masochism and the Politics of Personal Transformation," in <i>Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression</i> (New York, Routledge, 1990): 45-62.
		R	Jean Grimshaw, "Ethics, Fantasy, and Self-Transformation," <i>Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplements</i> 35 (September 1993): 145-158. (Optional) John Corvino, "Naughty Fantasies," <i>Southwest Philosophy Review</i> 18:1 (January 2002): 213-220.
12	Sex and Politics	M	Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of Politics of Sexuality" in <i>Culture, Society, and Sexuality: A Reader</i> (London, UCL Press, 1999): 150-187.
		R	Inés Hernández-Avila, "In Praise of Insubordination, or, What Makes a Good Woman Go Bad" in <i>The Chicana/o Cultural Studies Reader</i> (New York, Routledge, 2006): 191-202. Audre Lorde, "Uses of the Erotic" in <i>Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches</i> (Freedom, CA: The Crossing Press): 53-59.
13	<i>No readings</i>		