SSS 528  
Human Sexuality  
1 Credit  
Fall, 2009  
Instructor: Dorothy Van Dam, LICSW

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I. COURSE PURPOSE

This course presents an integrated approach to understanding human sexuality and the range of human sexual expression within an interactional framework. It examines human sexuality from a bio-psycho-social-spiritual perspective and explores sexual issues presented to social workers within a variety of social work practice settings and various models of practice. Theoretical bases for study in the field of human sexuality are explored. A professional approach to using appropriate modalities and practices is explored. The course provides an overview of the social worker’s role in counseling individuals, couples, families, agencies and organizations with sex-related concerns.

Course Philosophy

The philosophy underlying this course is the belief that sexuality is an integral part of the personality of every human being. Based on the Sex Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS), sexual development depends on, among other things, the satisfaction of basic human needs such as desire for contact, intimacy and love. Values include, among other things, respect for self and others and responsible behavior. (SIECUS, 2006).

This course will include lecture and interactional discussion of sexual rights as outlined by the World Health Organization. (WHO, 2006). The course draws upon the adult learning theory which emphasizes mutuality, reciprocity and collaboration. Lectures alternate with experiential learning exercises. Critical thinking is encouraged along with respectful expression of differences. This course emphasizes throughout the social worker’s ethical responsibility to clients and ethical responsibility to practice settings to promote the highest practice standards in the field. To assure that educational content and practices are timely and relevant, the course will include investigation and application of historical and current research.

Human sexuality is taught in a manner consistent with the mission of the Catholic University of America and the mission of NCSSS.
II. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Students will:

1. Develop an understanding of the complexity of human sexuality.
2. Understand psycho-sexual development with additional consideration of biological, social and spiritual contributors.
3. Appreciate the importance of the satisfaction of basic human needs such as desire for contact, intimacy, emotional expression, pleasure, tenderness and love as contributors to healthy sexual development.
4. Develop an understanding of sexual rights as outlined by the World Health Organization (WHO, 2006) and understand these as fundamental and universal human rights.
5. Develop an understanding of human sexuality, sexual expression, sexual behaviors and sexual problems.
6. Examine the theory and practice knowledge of the social work perspective specific to human sexuality.
7. Appreciate our roles as social workers and the importance of asking our clients about sexual concerns as part of our psycho-social assessments: if we don’t ask, how will we know?
8. Attain awareness of personal attitudes and values through the Sexual Attitude Reassessment exercise: to develop skill in dealing with worker issues that may intrude on the practice situation.
9. Be introduced to non-judgmental, inclusive approaches and skills needed to address and work with sexual concerns of clients.
10. Learn to identify the most common female and male sexual concerns at all stages of the life cycle.
11. Practice techniques such as role-play to develop and strengthen comfort and ability to “talk sex” with clients.
12. Critique theories of sexual and gender identity development in order to align with current research and demonstrate ability to understand gender identity development.
13. Consider the impact of aging and illness on sexuality.
14. Consider the impact of sexual coercion, sexual violence and the cycle of violence and the effects of sexual abuse on sexuality.

15. Understand how the above information is relevant in the context of social work practice in a variety of settings.

16. Appreciate the impact of cultural influences on sexuality and sexual behaviors.

17. Become more sensitive to ethical issues related to work with clients around sexual concerns.

18. Appreciate the importance of continued research for knowledge building in sexuality.

19. Develop ability to discuss findings and think critically about current research methodologies and publications/journals focused on human sexuality.

20. Demonstrate awareness of standards in the Code of Ethics specific to sexual responsibilities.

III. COURSE REQUIREMENTS

A. Texts and Readings

These readings may be supplemented with others. Students are encouraged to bring additional readings into class discussions relevant to class content. Texts and assigned readings are on reserve at the Mullen Library.

Required Readings


Recommended Readings: Periodicals and Other Resources

Contemporary Sexuality

Culture, Sex and Sexuality
Harvard Mental Health Letter

Harvard Women’s Health Watch

Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy

Kinsey Today

Sexual Health & Medicine

Social Work

Websites

American Association of Sex Educators, Counselors and Therapists (AASECT)
http://www.aasect.org

Sexuality Information and Education Council of the United States (SIECUS)
http://siecus.org/

The Society for the Scientific Study of Sex (SSSS)
http://www.ssc.wisc.edu/ssss/

World Association of Sexology (WAS)
http://www.tc.umn.edu/nlhome/m201/colem001/was/wasindex.htm

World Association for Sexual Health
http://www.worldsexology.org

World Health Organization (WHO)
www.who.org

B. Assignments

Each student is responsible for:

1. Oral class participation on weekly assigned readings, interactive discussions relevant to lectures and experiential group exercises.

2. Annotated bibliography on 1-2 journal articles of interest related to human sexuality. Each annotation should contain a brief
3. Term paper. (5 to 7 pages). The following options were offered in 2008-2009:

**Option I.** From a bio-psycho-social-spiritual perspective, trace the gender identity development of yourself, a friend, a client or a character in a novel, play or film. Please disguise if using self, friend or client and obtain consent.

**Option II.** Issues/opinion paper on topic of current interest specific to human sexuality; for example, choose one: 1) Many people believe that sex education can itself cause problems because the more children learn about sexuality, the more likely they are to experiment sexually. Do you think this assumption is valid? If so, do you believe it is a good reason not to teach children about sex? 2) What is your opinion about abstinence only sex education?

The term paper is due the last day of class.

The APA Manual of style is required for the term paper.

C. Seminar Participation. Seminar objectives will be achieved through group discussion, presentations by the instructor, experiential exercises and the term paper. Student experiences in fieldwork, case materials, and role plays will be utilized. The course is structured to facilitate the student in developing knowledge of sexuality and ease in discussing sexuality with clients as part of the psycho-social assessment process.

D. Course Expectations

1. Students are expected to attend all classes and to conduct themselves in an ethical and scholarly fashion. In the event that it is necessary to miss a class or come late, s/he is expected to notify the instructor in advance. Assigned readings and assigned tasks are expected to be completed prior to each class session.

2. The course combines the formats of didactic lectures and participatory seminars. Students and the instructor will endeavor to draw on their own experience including professional practice experience, relevant literature and analytic thinking about the course content. Each
student is expected to participate actively in class discussions and to come prepared to share current knowledge, ideas, and relevant experiences, as appropriate. Students and instructor will view each other as resource persons.

3. See the NCSSS Bulletin and student handbook for other expectations relative to student responsibilities and comportment.

E. **Grading Policy.** Each of the above will constitute a portion of the final grade. The University grading system will be utilized (see policy in NCSSS Bulletin). The grade will be based upon the extent to which the student meets the course objectives as demonstrated by seminar participation and the assignments.

   - Attendance and class participation 20%
   - Annotated Bibliography 20%
   - Final paper 60%

F. **Learning Contract/Plan and Goals & Learning Style**

   Each student will outline specific interests and goals for semester on the attached learning goals form due on the second class meeting. You are asked to describe your field placement and how knowledge of human sexuality is relevant to your work. Also, briefly describe your learning style: how do you best learn?

G. **Evaluation Plan**

   NCSSS requires electronic evaluation of this course and the instructor. At the end of the course, the evaluation form may be accessed at [http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations](http://evaluations.cua.edu/evaluations) using your CUA user name and password. Additional informal written or verbal feedback to the instructor during the semester is encouraged and attempts will be made to respond to special requests. These evaluations will serve as a basis for ongoing course revisions.
CLASS SCHEDULE

Class 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE COURSE

Overview of the course purpose and structure: why are we here? What is our interest in learning about human sexuality and its relevance to social work practice?

Description of field placement and previous social work experience, population served and role in practice setting.

Definitions:
- Human sexuality
- Sex
- Sexuality
- Sexual Health/Sexual rights
- Intimacy
- Love

Experiential:
Voluntary participation in “quiet” review (no discussion) of own sexual history. Voluntary discussion of experience/debriefing and reflection on relevance of exercise specific to learning about human sexuality.

Required Readings

Crooks & Bauer: Chapters 1, 2.

World Health Organization’s Declaration of Sexual Rights (Hand out).


Class 2 THE NEED FOR AND HISTORY OF HUMAN SEXUALITY EDUCATION IN SOCIAL WORK

Lecture
Examination and reflection on attitudes, values and biases toward sexuality.

Experiential exercise: Sexual Attitude Reassessment
Reflective discussion on why this is important
Discussion of current research and ethical concerns


**Required Readings**


Crooks & Baur: Chapter 2.


**Class 3 SEXUALITY THROUGH OUT THE LIFE CYCLE**

Sexual Development in Infancy and Childhood

Developmental foundation of sexuality and childhood sexual behaviors: the fundamental components of sexuality evident in infancy and childhood are presented using as a framework the three dimensional model of sexual development: the dimensions include:

1) Gender identity, sexual response and capacity for close dyadic relationships.
2) Childhood stages: infancy (0-2 years,) toddler/preschool (2-5 years,) and school age (6-10 years.)
3) A continuum of childhood sexual behaviors, normal to pathologic, is presented.

Sexual Development of Adolescence: the consolidation of sexual identity.

Developmental tasks, sexual health, patterns of sexual behavior, counseling teens on sex.

Experiential: What’s your teen cultural literacy?

**Required Readings**

Crooks & Baur, Chapters 3, 10 and 13.
Singer, M. Childhood Sexuality: An Interpersonal- Intrapsychic Integration, Contemporary Sexuality, (handout).


**Class 4  SEXUALITY THROUGHOUT THE LIFE CYCLE (continued)**

- Adult sexuality and the older years: the wise years.
- Impact of aging and illness on sexuality.
- Impact of sexual violence on sexuality.

Summary of Course and Course Evaluation

**Required Readings**

Crooks & Baur: Chapters 14, 17, 19, 20.
LEARNING GOALS

Focus: A brief statement of your practice background, your professional interests, and your overall learning goals.

1) Name:_____________________________________

2) Address:___________________________________

3) Telephone: (Home)_____________________(Office)__________________
   e-mail_________________________________________________________

4) Concentration:_______________________________

5) Expectations for course: (Please discuss your areas of interest in relation to this course and your expectations.)

6) Learning style: (Please give an indication of your learning style, the ways you seem to learn best.)