Sex and European Feminism, c. 1800-1918
History 300-33

Harris L06
Mondays and Wednesdays, 3:30-4:50pm

Dr. Kirsten Leng
k-leng@northwestern.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 2:30-3:30pm (and by appointment)
Harris Hall 235
847 467 2670
Course Description

This course focuses on European feminists’ engagements with questions of sex and sexuality and their demands for the reform of sexual life. Because covering an entire continent is impossible, we will focus on developments in Britain, France, and Germany. We will examine feminists’ writings on and activism surrounding sex and sexuality to address questions such as: Why were sex and sexuality of particular concern to feminists? What connections did feminists make between sexual reform, women’s rights, and broader social, political, and economic change? How did feminist attitudes towards sex change over time, and how did attitudes vary among feminists themselves?

Course Objectives

• Understand why, and in what ways, sex was a central issue for feminists during the nineteenth century
• Analyze how “sex,” “feminism,” and “sexual politics” changed over time
• Interrogate contradictions, tensions and continuities within diverse feminist approaches to sexuality
• Evaluate the role of class and racial difference in shaping feminist sexual politics
• Assess similarities and differences among feminists from different national-backgrounds
• Reflect on the legacy of this history for late twentieth century and early twenty-first century feminist sexual politics

Requirements and Evaluation

Participation: 25%

Not only are students expected to complete the readings; they are also expected to participate in class discussions. If for any reason a student is unable to participate in this manner, s/he should contact me as soon as possible to make alternative arrangements. Additionally, each student will be responsible for leading discussion of one week’s worth of reading as part of a group of two or three. These groups will develop five questions to guide
class discussions. These questions should be posted as a new forum on Blackboard’s Discussion Board (under Course Tools) at least one day in advance of class to guide our discussions. The rest of the class is then responsible for reading the questions, informally preparing responses, and bringing these to class for discussion. Groups are welcome to meet with me to discuss the readings and proposed questions prior to posting them.

Written Work: 75%

• Two Short Essays:
  • Compare/contrast Essay, 5-6 pages (20%)
  • Primary Source Analysis, 5-6 pages (20%)

• Take-Home Final Exam (35%): This exam will be in essay format. Students will answer 2 of 5 questions. Completed exams will not exceed 20 double-spaced typed pages.

Readings

Each week, we will read a combination of primary and secondary sources related to the theme at hand. The readings are complications of short selections from an array of sources. It is imperative that everyone completes the readings, every week, both to ensure individual comprehension and to foster vibrant discussion. The ability to read large amounts of text efficiently and incisively is a critical skill.

All readings are available through electronic course reserve and on Blackboard as indicated. The following texts are available for purchase at Northwestern University Bookstore and are available via Library Reserves:

Required:

• Barbara Taylor, Eve and the New Jerusalem: Socialism and Feminism in the Nineteenth Century (Harvard University Press, 1993)
• Lucy Bland, Banishing the Beast: English feminism and sexual morality, 1885-1914 (Penguin Books, 1995)

Recommended:

• Jennifer Waelti-Walters and Steven C. Hause, eds. Feminisms of the Belle Époque: A Historical and Literary Anthology (University of Nebraska Press, 1994)

Writing Resources

I encourage you to visit me during office hours to workshop your papers. For further assistance, you can visit the History Writing Center:

History Writing Center
Location: Cafe in Main Library
Contact: historywriting@northwestern.edu
A Note on Plagiarism

Please use Chicago-style footnotes and bibliographic citations in all essays. The Chicago Manual of Style, 16th Edition (2010) is available online via NUCat. Remember: online sources must be cited! Plagiarism is a serious academic offense, and Weinberg College rules require that all suspected of such infractions will be referred to the Dean’s Office for formal disciplinary proceedings.

Students with Disabilities

Any student with a documented disability requiring accommodation is requested to speak directly to the Office of Services for Students with Disabilities (Evanston campus: 847-467-5530), and to meet with me as soon as possible, preferably within the first two weeks of class. All discussion will remain confidential.

Course Overview

The course proceeds chronologically, and can be divided roughly into three sections. Weeks 1 and 2 examine early nineteenth century feminist visions of sex and social order, and analyze the relationships between feminists’ sex reform activism, socialism, and attempts to expand citizenship rights. Weeks 3, 4, and 5 explore the first mass feminist sex reform movement, the campaign against the regulation of prostitution, and its socio-political effects. Weeks 6, 7, 8, and 9 concentrate on developments in feminist sexual thought and politics at the so-called “fin-de-siècle,” a moment in European history that was both politically and socially fraught and culturally fertile.

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<tr>
<th>WEEK #</th>
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<tr>
<td>1 Feminism, women’s rights, sex reform, social change I</td>
<td>Jan 3</td>
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<td>2 Feminism, women’s rights, sex reform, social change II</td>
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<td>3 Prostitution I</td>
<td>Jan 16</td>
<td>Jan 18 Assignment Distributed Today!</td>
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<td>4 Prostitution II</td>
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<td>5 Prostitution III: Aftermath</td>
<td>Jan 30 Essay #1: FINAL due</td>
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<td>6 New Women, New Rules?</td>
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<td>7 “Radical” Sexual Politics</td>
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<td>8 Maternalism</td>
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<td>9 Sexual “Abnormality”?</td>
<td>Feb 27 Essay #2: FINAL due</td>
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<td>10 Summary</td>
<td>Mar 5</td>
<td>Mar 7 NO CLASS</td>
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Take home exam distributed
Syllabus

WEEK 1: Feminist visions of sex and social order

January 3: Introduction

• Introduction to course, its objectives and structure
• Defining terms: feminism, sex, sexuality, sexual politics
• Setting the scene: France in the 1820s-1830s

January 4: Saint-Simonian feminism in France, 1820s-1830s: women’s rights, sexual reform, social change among ‘utopian’ socialists


WEEK 2: Feminist visions of sex and social order

January 9: Owenite feminism in Britain, 1820-1840s: sexual reform and the “New Moral World”


January 11: Utopianism as lived reality: cleavages of sex and class in Utopian and Popular Working-Class Movements, 1840s-1850s

• Claire Goldberg Moses, “Searching for Direction,” in French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century, 89-98
• Sally Alexander, “Women, Class and Sexual Differences in the 1830s and 1840s: Some Reflections on the Writing of a Feminist History,” History Workshop Journal 17 (Spring 1984): 135-147

WEEK 3: Prostitution

January 16: NO CLASS


• Keith Nield, “Introduction,” in Prostitution in the Victorian Age, 1-9

Recommended Reading:
• “Art. VI—Prostitution in Relation to the National Health. Report from the Selection Committee of the House of Lords on the Contagious Diseases Act, 1866; together with the Proceedings of the Committee, Minutes of Evidence, and Appendix. Session 1867-8,” in Keith Nield, Prostitution in the Victorian Age, 179-231

WEEK 4: Prostitution

January 23: British Women’s Campaigns against the state regulation of prostitution, 1870s 1880s

• Ellen Vokes, “Unjustly accused of prostitution!” in Victorian Women, 423-428

January 25: The International Abolitionist Movement: The Spread of Agitation against the State Regulation of Prostitution Across Europe, 1870s-1900


• Christine Machiels, Dealing with the Issue of Prostitution: Mobilizing Feminisms in France, Switzerland and Belgium (1875-1920), Women’s History Review 17, no. 2 (2008): 195-205


• Ghénia Avril de Sainte-Croix on prostitutes as serfs, in Feminisms of the Belle Époque: A Historical and Literary Anthology, edited by Jennifer R. Waelti-Walters and Steven C. Hause (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1994): 169-176

• Case Studies of Belle Époque Prostitutes, in Feminisms of the Belle Époque: A Historical and Literary Anthology, 177-183

WEEK 5: Aftermath of Feminist Anti-Prostitution Campaigns: Regulating Morality, Publicizing Intimacy, 1880s-1890s

January 30: Social Purity and Moral Vigilance [Essay #1 DUE TODAY!!]


• Josephine Butler, “Social Purity,” TSD 170-189

• Ellice Hopkins, “The Power of Womanhood,” TSD, 446-457

February 1: “Is Marriage a Failure?” Feminists Debate the Fate of Marriage

• Lucy Bland, “Marriage: Its Iniquities and Its Alternatives,” in Banishing the Beast, 124-150

• Mona Caird, The Morality of Marriage, and Other Essays on the Status and Destiny of Women (London: George Redway, 1897): 138-149

• Annie Besant, “Marriage,” and Jane Hume Clapperton, “Scientific Meliorism,” in OsW, 13-15

• Louise-Marie Compain, selection from L’Un vers l’autre, in Feminisms of the Belle Epoque, 202-210


WEEK 6: New Women, New Rules? Sex and Subjectivity enter public discourse, 1890s-1900s

February 6: The New Woman and her demands

February 8: Rethinking Female [Heterosexual] Desire

• Lucy Bland, “Marriage: Its Iniquities and Its Alternatives” and “Speaking of Sex” in Banishing the Beast, 162-182, 256-260, 271-283, 286-7
• Debate between Kathlyn Oliver and “A New Subscriber” (Stella Browne) in “The Freewoman”, 15 February 1912-18 April 1912 *Reading available on Blackboard under “Control Panel-Files-Readings February 8”
• “The Spinster. By One,” The Freewoman in TSD, 602-606
• Jane Clapperton, Annie Besant, and Elizabeth Blackwell in OsW, 17-19
• Maud Churton Braby, Cicely Hamilton, Margaret Stephens, Olive Schreiner, Lucy Re-Bartlett, Mary Scharlieb and F. Arthur Sibly, OsW, 44-46
• Frances Swiney, Cicely Hamilton, Lucy Re-Bartlett, Edith Lees Ellis, Edith Lees Ellis and F. W Stella Browne in OsW, 54-60

WEEK 7: A New Ethic? Feminism and ‘Radical’ Sexual Politics, 1890s-1910s

Feb 13: Feminism, Sexual Expression, and Free Love

• Lucy Bland, “Marriage: Its Iniquities and Its Alternatives,” in Banishing the Beast, 151-161

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• Jane Hume Clapperton, selections from “Marriage,” in *A Vision of the Future* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1904), 131-148

February 15: Birth Control: A Feminist Campaign? [*Assignment Distributed Today*]

• Lucy Bland, “Contraception, Feminism, and the Malthusian League,” in *Banishing the Beast*, 189-217
• Jane Hume Clapperton and Annie Besant in *OsW*, 31-33
• Frances Swiney, Maud Churton Braby, Cicely Hamilton, Margaret Stephens, Lucy Re-Bartlett, Christabel Pankhurst, Mary Scharlieb, Working Mothers, and Stella Browne, in *OsW*, 73-77
• Nelly Roussel on birth control and the ‘Freedom of Motherhood,’ in *Feminisms of the Belle Époque*, 242-253
• Madeleine Pelletier on the right to an abortion, *Feminisms of the Belle Époque*, 253-265

WEEK 8: Maternalism and Feminism: Yoking Together Women’s Fortunes and Collective Futures

February 20: A “Right to Motherhood”? New directions in feminist sexual politics

• Katherine Anthony, “The Mutterschutz Idea,” in *Feminism in Germany and Scandinavia* (1915): 83-116
• Ellen Key, “The Woman Movement,” in *TSD*, 573-601
• Marcelle Tinayre, selections from *La Rebelle*, in *Feminisms of the Belle Époque*, 218-227 [Unmarried Mothers]
• Tracie Matysik, “The ‘New Ethic’: A Particularist Challenge,” in *Reforming the Moral Subject*, 70-76

• Lucy Bland, selections from “Eugenics, the Politics of Selective Breeding, and Feminist Appropriation,” in *Banishing the Beast*, 222-237

**WEEK 9: “Sexual Abnormalities”? Feminism, Homosexuality, and Male Sexuality**

**February 27: What is ‘female homosexuality”? [Essay #2 FINAL VERSION DUE TODAY!!]**

- Lucy Bland, “Speaking of Sex,” in *Banishing the Beast*, 288-296

**Feb 29: Sex Wars? Feminism and Male Sexuality**

WEEK 10: Accounting for the Past: The Legacy of Nineteenth Century Feminist Sexual Politics

March 5 [TAKE HOME EXAM DISTRIBUTED TODAY]

• Ellen C. Dubois and Linda Gordon, “Seeking Ecstasy on the Battlefield: Danger and Pleasure in Nineteenth-Century Feminist Sexual Thought,” 9, no.1 Feminist Studies (Spring 1983), 7-26
• Lucy Bland, “Conclusion,” in Banishing the Beast, 304-314
• Margaret Jackson, “Feminism, Sexuality and Male Power” and “Feminism and the Power to Define our own Sexuality,” in The Real Facts of Life: Feminism and the Politics of Sexuality, c. 1850-1940 (Taylor and Francis, 1994): 1-5, 182-186
• Sheila Jeffreys, “Introduction” and “Afterword” in The Spinster and Her Enemies, 1-5, 194-196
• Denise Riley, “Bodies, Identities, Feminisms,” in Am I That Name? Feminism and the Category of ‘Women’ in History (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1988): 96-114