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Lecture: Tu/Th 3:30-4:45
Room: CAS 211
Office Hours: Tu 9-10, Th 12:30-2:30

HI303: Sex, Love, Family: Relationships in American History from Birth to Death



Studying the history of sex, love, and family reveals the degree to which our personal relationships are conditioned by the times. This course explores how Americans' most intimate bonds have and have not changed over the last two centuries, paying particular attention to romantic arrangements and family dynamics since the 1950s. Rather than moving chronologically (for example, by decade or presidential administration), we will follow the life cycle beginning with birth and ending with death, surveying common American milestones along the way such as coming of age, getting married, and having children. Using comparisons with the past to elucidate truths about our own era, this course will look for social norms, patterns of thinking, and widespread daily practices while also paying attention to differences due to class, race, and religion as well as sexual orientation and political affiliation.

The sources we will study range widely from diaries, short stories, films, podcasts, television episodes, and stand-up comedy to contemporary ethnographies, advice manuals, and memoirs. Together they will help us explore a variety of themes such as how new technologies have changed human interactions; how Americans have invented and understood various rituals such as coming out or having a mid-life crisis; how family and romantic ideals have stacked up next to everyday realities (and what Americans do to fill the gap between them); and how couples and families have answered the tricky question: who is in charge?

COURSE MATERIALS:

The following required books are available at the **BU Bookstore**:

Rachel Held Evans, *Faith Unraveled* (2014)

Dan Savage, *The Commitment* (2005)

Tom Perrotta, *Nine Inches* (2013)

Peggy Vincent, *Baby Catcher: Chronicles of a Modern Midwife* (2002)

Additional readings and links to audio and video files will be available on **Blackboard Learn** (<https://learn.bu.edu>).

In addition to readings, this course will also have several **assigned films and television episodes** to view outside of class time. These can be “rented” online at amazon.com, iTunes, or other sites for a small fee. Details and links can be found on Blackboard.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Assignments for this course consist of **two take-home exams and a multimedia research project**, the details of which can be found at the back of the syllabus. Preparation for the research project, due at the end of the semester, will include a series of preliminary tasks to be completed during the course of the semester. To pass the course, **you must complete and pass all of the assignments**. You will not be able to do well without attending the lectures and studying the assigned sources.

Your final grade will be calculated according to the following percentages:

First Exam (25%)

Second Exam (30%)

Final Project author statement, proposal, bibliography/update assignments (5%)

Participation/ comments on group members projects (5%)

Final Project (35%)

ATTENDANCE and PARTICIPATION: Attendance is expected. The course will mix lectures and discussions, and will be more successful if everyone completes the day’s reading before class. Thoughtful participation in discussions may be taken into consideration when determining final grades, especially in cases that are borderline between two grades. Students who miss more than a few classes should expect to have their final grades reduced.

LATE POLICY: Late assignments will be **penalized one-third grade per day** (example: a B that is one day late becomes a B-). All students are required to keep copies of their graded work until the end of the semester.

PLAGIARISM: Remember that plagiarism and other forms of academic misconduct are serious offenses, and it's your responsibility to know and understand the provisions of the CAS Academic Conduct Code. Cases of suspected academic misconduct in this course will be referred to the Dean's Office, where serious sanctions may be imposed, such as suspension or expulsion. For a detailed description of Boston University's rules, consult the code of conduct at <http://www.bu.edu/academics/resources/academic-conduct-code/> or pick up a copy in CAS advising at 100 Bay State Road.

OTHER GROUND RULES: No laptop or cell phone use in class and no multitasking when reading, watching, or listening to assigned sources at home. The temptation to check email, shop for jeans, or otherwise juggle and surf while studying or even sitting in class is strong. "Multitasking" sounds like a positive skill that good time managers master. Yet studies have shown over and over again that dividing your attention in this manner does not work. It lowers comprehension, thwarts long-term memory retention, and undermines the quality of class discussions. Your courses deserve the kind of focus and respect you give to any other momentous gathering, whether it be church, live entertainment, or yoga class.

This course will cover explicit and controversial content. If you would not be comfortable viewing, say, a Seth Rogen movie (and I don't mean *Kung Fu Panda*), then this won't be for you. In addition to some R-rated content, we will also address many sensitive issues that may "hit close to home." Our goal in class will be to be honest but respectful of each others' opinions, so that we can bring our own experiences and knowledge to bear on the course topics while also keeping our discussions civil, productive, and grounded in historical analysis. We will be testing our own views, assumptions, and practices by comparing them to how others have done things differently—asking not only what do we think but also why do we think the way we do? How and why have others thought differently?

Disabilities and special needs. Students with documented disabilities or special needs should contact the professor as soon as possible for appropriate accommodations. For more information, please contact the Office of Disability Services at (617) 353-3658. All discussions will be confidential.

If, in the course of the semester, you feel like you are having mental health challenges, please reach out to B.U. Counseling (<https://www.bu.edu/students/health/counseling/>). Phone assistance is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week at 617-353-3569.

* This course counts toward a Women's, Gender, & Sexuality Studies minor. For further information about the WGS minor, contact the program at wgs@bu.edu or see the website at www.bu.edu/wgs.

HUB LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Historical Consciousness

Students will create historical narratives, evaluate interpretations based on historical evidence, and construct historical arguments.

Students will demonstrate an ability to interpret primary source material (textual, visual, or aural) using a range of interpretive skills and situating the material in its historical and cultural context.

Students will demonstrate knowledge of American traditions, intellectual paradigms, forms of political organization, and socioeconomic and familial forces, as they have shaped the American life cycle and changed over time.

These outcomes will be reached by regular attendance and participation in lectures, completing weekly readings, two exams, and a final paper based on original primary source research and analysis.

Digital/Multimedia Expression

Students will be able to craft and deliver responsible, considered, and well-structured arguments using digital multimedia.

Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the capabilities of various communication technologies and source genres, and be able to use engage with them ethically and effectively.

Students will be able to demonstrate an understanding of the fundamentals of visual communication, such as principles governing design, time-based and interactive media, and the audio-visual representation of qualitative and quantitative data.

These outcomes will be met by completing a series of short assignments in preparation for the final, multimedia research essay as well as attending a series of workshops over the course of the semester, during which students explore different digital research resources, various technologies for communicating their findings and embedding multimedia in academic essays, and the aesthetics and ethics of online presentation. Students also join small groups and comment on each others' research projects as they unfold, helping them learn about the art of constructive feedback, the benefits of research communities, and how to interact effectively and responsibly online.

Students will be expected to embed A/V materials (images, movie segments, music, interactive graphics) as evidence to support their argument for the final multimedia essay. The inclusion of such materials and their appropriate use will be a determinant of the final grade on the research essay.

SCHEDULE OF LECTURES AND SOURCE ASSIGNMENTS:

Week 1: Family Ideals and Realities Over Time

Tues., Sept. 3: Changing Portraits

Thurs., Sept. 5: Family Vacations

SOURCES: “Happy Weekend” (1958), *Leave it to Beaver*, Season two, episode 13

“Hawaii” (2010), *Modern Family*, Season one, episode 23

Week 2: Beginnings

Tues., Sept. 10: Being Born

SOURCES: Dr. Joseph DeLee, “The Prophylactic Forceps Operation,” *American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology*, 1 (1920)

Peggy Vincent, *Baby Catcher: Chronicles of a Modern Midwife* (2002), pps. 17-38, 55-66, 185-90

Thurs., Sept. 12: Baby Time

SOURCES: Luther Emmett Holt, *The Care and Feeding of Children* (1900), excerpts

Benjamin Spock, *The Common Sense Book of Baby and Child Care* (1957 edition), excerpts

Dr. William Sears, *The Baby Book* (1993), excerpts

THIS WEEK: Workshops on defining a research project, formatting posts, and embedding A/V material

— *About the Author posting due by the start of class.*

Week 3: Childhood

Tues., Sept. 17: Learning to Play

SOURCES: “The Management of Young Children” and “Domestic Amusements” in Catherine Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe, *The American Woman’s Home* (1869)

The Art of Roughhousing (2010), excerpts

Thurs., Sept. 19: Learning to Cope

SOURCES: *Horatio Lovejoy’s New Year’s Eve* (1882)

David Sedaris, “Let It Snow,” *New Yorker* (2003)

Susan Burton, “In the Event of an Emergency, Put Your Sister in an Upright Position” *This American Life* (2001)

THIS WEEK: Workshops on research strategies, using databases, assessing online sources

Week 4: Adolescence

Tues., Sept. 24: Boys Will Be Boys

— *Multimedia research paper proposal due by the start of class.*

Thurs., Sept. 26: Girls Gone Wild

SOURCES:

T. L. Haines and L. W. Yaggy, *The Royal Path of Life* (1878)

Dawson’s Creek pilot (1998)

Superbad (2007)

— *Comment on your group’s proposals by the start of class.*

Week 5: Rites of Passage

Tues., Oct. 1: School Days

SOURCES: *The Breakfast Club* (1985)

Molly Ringwald, "Revising the movies of my youth in the age of #MeToo,"
New Yorker (2018)

Thurs., Oct. 3: Coming of Age

SOURCES: Anne Moody, *Coming of Age in Mississippi* (1992), 31-45 (ch. 3)

Rachel Held Evans, *Faith Unraveled* (2010), 1, 7, and 9

— *'Past You' Exam distributed at the end of lecture.*

THIS WEEK: Workshops, exam review

Week 6: Exam Week

Tues., Oct. 8: Sex Talk and Teen Pregnancy

SOURCES: "Karen," "Marge," and "Dorothy" remember teen pregnancy in the 1960s

"Maci," *Sixteen and Pregnant* (2009)

Thurs., Oct. 10: Workshop: online aesthetics, ethics, and arguments

— *'Past You' Exam due at the beginning of lecture.*

Week 7: Sexual Educations

Tues., Oct. 15: No class (Monday schedule)

Thurs., Oct 17: Self Discoveries

SOURCES: Coming out stories in Merla, *Boys Like Us* and Larkin, *A Woman Like That*

Malcolm Conner, "The Physics of Forbidden Love," *New York Times* (2017)
"Thanksgiving" (2017), *Master of None*, season 2, episode 8

Week 8: Young Adulthood

Tues., Oct 22: The Lost Arts of Romance and Seduction

SOURCES: E. E. Cummings, "may i feel said he" (1935)
"The Art of Romance" (1959), *Father Knows Best*
"The Naked Man" (2008), *How I Met Your Mother*
Kirsten Roupenian, "Cat Person," *New Yorker* (2017)

Thurs., Oct. 24: Being "Single"

SOURCES: "When to Marry" in Rev. George Hudson, *The Marriage Guide for Young Men* (1883)
"Open Season on Bachelors" in inaugural issue of *Playboy* (1953)
Insecure pilot (2016)

— ***Research report and annotated bibliography due at the start of lecture.***

Week 9: Commitments

Tues., Oct. 29: Tying the Knot

SOURCES: "The Bachelor," *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet* (1958)
Sheila Cronan, "Marriage" (1970) in Koedt, Levine, and Rapone, eds., *Radical Feminism*
Dan Savage, *The Commitment* (2005), chs. 4, 6, 8

Thurs., Oct. 31: Considering Kids

SOURCES: Letters to Margaret Sanger in *Motherhood and Bondage* (1928)
Melanie Thernstrom, "Meet the Twiblings," *New York Times* (2010)

Week 10: Making a Home

Tues., Nov. 5: The Politics of Housework

SOURCES: Pat Mainardi, "The Politics of Housework," (1970)
"Ward and June R Us," in *The Bastard on the Couch* (2004)
Femivores and New Domesticity, *Salon* (2013)

Thurs., Nov. 7: Workshop

— *Research draft due at the start of class.*

Week 11: Moms and Dads Paying the Bills

Tues., Nov. 12: The F Word

— *Comment on group's drafts due at the start of class.*

Thurs., Nov. 14: Man Up

SOURCES: Betty Friedan, *The Feminine Mystique* (1963), excerpt
"Attila the Honey I'm Home" and "The Myth of Co-Parenting" in *The Bitch in the House* (2002)
"A Brief History of the (Over)involved Father" in *The Bastard on the Couch* (2004)
Terry Martin Hekker, "Paradise Lost" (2006), *New York Times*

Week 12: Middle Age

Tues., Nov. 19: Sex and Intimacy in the Prime of Life

SOURCES: Crystal Eastman, "Marriage Under Two Roofs" (1923)

Marabel Morgan, *The Total Woman* (1973), excerpts

"The Lock Box" and "Father of the Year" in *The Bastard on the Couch* (2004)

Thurs., Nov. 21: The Mid-Life Crisis

SOURCES: "The Smile on Happy Chang's Face," "Kiddie Pool," "The Chosen Girl," and "The All-Night Party," in Tom Perrotta, *Nine Inches* (2013)

Week 13: Over the Hill

Tues., Nov. 26: Exam Review

— *'Future You' Exam distributed at the end of lecture*

Thurs., Nov. 28: Thanksgiving

Week 14: Wrapping It Up

Tues., Dec. 3: Growing Old

SOURCES: Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club* (1989), excerpts

Sandra Tsing Loh, "Daddy Issues: Why Caring for My Aging Father Has Me Wishing He Would Die," *The Atlantic*, March 2012

Thurs., Dec 5: Dying and Death

— *'Future You' Exam due at the start of lecture*

Week 15: The End

Tues., Dec. 10: Historicizing Your Life

SOURCES: *Email Professor Blower your own photos to appear in lecture on the last day.*

Final essay due December 13, by noon.

Research Project: 2,500 Word Multimedia Essay

Develop a research project that reveals **the history of some aspect of intimate American life**: a certain everyday object (eg. love songs, greeting cards, chores, or obituaries), a common practice (eg. bullying, babyproofing, or kissing), event (bachelorette parties, honeymoons) a type of person (eg. in laws, orphans, siblings, or chaperones), or a cultural stereotype (the Jewish mother, the Latin lover).

The smaller your topic the better this assignment will go (something weird or obscure but revealing would work well). What are your subject's origins and how and why has it changed over time? What does your research reveal about the broader culture—what's actually at stake in this bizarre relic or custom? In other words, if you gave the class a lecture on your subject, what story would you tell and why?

Your goal will be to gather and analyze an array of sources and make a compelling argument that enriches your readers' understanding of recent American history. A strong essay will go beyond providing a simple summary report. It will be anchored by a complex, arguable thesis that is developed and sustained throughout. It will also rest on a solid, creatively assembled body of evidence—from the course lectures and readings as well as outside research. The finished product should demonstrate the writer's interest in the topic and ability to engage the material using skills and knowledge gained from the course.

Your progress on the research project will be assisted by **a series of workshops and deadlines during the course of the semester:**

a) About the Author Statement

To familiarize yourself with creating text and embedding images in Google Docs, find your page on our course site, write two to three sentences about yourself, and post a picture—perhaps from your childhood, enduring a family vacation, etc.

b) Essay Proposal

Above your About the Author statement, add a 500-word essay proposal, pitching your idea for the final assignment. Explain your specific question, problem, or strange small thing you want to explore. **Convince us that you should be allowed to write about it.** Add some ethnographic observations about your practice as it appears in American culture today, explain why you find it interesting, and speculate about how researching your topic's longer history might reveal new insights.

c) Comment on Peers' Proposals

Students will be assigned to small groups. In the comments sections provide feedback on the proposals of your group members. Can you think of any sources they should consult? Would their project benefit by being narrower? What else might help them get their research underway?

d) Research Report and Annotated Bibliography

Add to your Google Docs page a detailed paragraph outlining how you've gone about your research. Summarize what you've found so far and what you haven't found but wish you could. Reflect on how you might best make use of a multimedia format. Append to this an annotated bibliography of the **ten most important sources that you will use in your essay** (in other words, include the sources full bibliographic citation and write a few sentences under each entry explaining why it is so useful).

e) Rough Draft

Expand upon the writing you have done in your proposal and research report, following the tips in the syllabus about crafting a strong research essay. Keep (or update) your Bibliography and About the Author statement. Peruse the site to view other students' work and **offer helpful, constructive feedback on at least five other students' projects.**

f) Comments on Rough Drafts

Students will be assigned to a new small group. Read the drafts of your group members and offer them substantive feedback in the comments section by answering the following: 1) what is the most interesting aspect/detail of the draft? What is their thesis as you understand it? What would be a reasonable counterargument to their thesis? Is a counterargument employed effectively in the draft and if not how might it be? What other revisions would make the essay more compelling?

Final Draft. Replace your draft with a final essay. Your final webpage should feature a Title and complete essay with audiovisual supplementary material interspersed, followed by your About the Author Statement, followed by your bibliography.

Papers will be graded based on the following criteria: Thesis and Line of Argument (30 points); Evidence and Analysis (20 points); Structure (20 points); Presentation and Multimedia use (30 points). Guidelines and a more detailed grading rubric for the final project will be distributed in class.

Grading and Expectations for the Final Project:

Final projects for this course should draw specifically on course lectures and assigned sources as well as on your own independent research. Your goal is not simply to summarize and regurgitate the ideas of others, but rather to craft an original essay that builds upon the work we have done together over the course of the semester. You should support your thesis with detailed evidence and analysis that is sustained throughout the entire essay in a clear and cogent manner.

Your argument should be a historical rather than political or philosophical one; your job is to make claims about what Americans thought and did (and why) at a particular time, NOT what you personally think about certain beliefs or policies. Try to imagine and uncover the historical conditions lead people to think in particular ways at particular moments.

Note: In order to avoid charges of plagiarism, it is essential that you carefully attribute the sources of all of your knowledge.

Essays will be evaluated according to the following criteria:

An “A” range essay is both ambitious and successful. It presents a perceptive and independent argument backed up by well-chosen evidence, a creative and compelling use of sources, and sensitivity to historical context. It demonstrates that the writer has grappled seriously with the issues of the course, has done a close, critical reading of the texts, and has synthesized the readings, lectures, and well-chosen, clearly-attributed outside sources. It also makes creative, effective use of multimedia materials and is presented in a readable, engaging online format.

A “B” range essay is one that is ambitious but only partially successful, or one that achieves modest aims well. It may demonstrate many of the aspects of A-level work, but falls short in organization and clarity, the formulation and presentation of its argument, the depth of source analysis, or its formatting and use of multimedia material. It demonstrates a command of course material, proper attribution of sources, and an understanding of historical context and contains flashes of insight, but lacks consistency or depth in the argument, or easy online readability.

A “C” range essay has significant problems in articulating and presenting its argument, or seems to lack a central argument entirely. Oftentimes, C-range papers offer little more than a summary of information covered in the course, or they might prove insensitive to historical context, contain factual errors, unclear writing, poor organization and presentation, or insufficient evidence.

A “D” essay, in addition to displaying the shortcomings of a C-range paper, also fails to grapple seriously with either ideas or texts, or fails to address the expectations of the assignment. A D essay suggests seriously insufficient command of the course material.

An “F” essay falls short in the manner of a “D” essay. It is also often significantly shorter than the assigned length, does not demonstrate even a glint of potentially original thought, and suggests a lack of effort or no competence in the material at hand.