

PSYCHOLOGY OF CASUAL SEX

COURSE INFORMATION

Meeting times: Tuesday, 1:00 – 3:30 pm

Location: Meyer 465

INSTRUCTOR: ZHANA VRANGALOVA, PHD

COURSE MATERIALS

Book:

-Wade, L. (2016). *American Hookup: The New Culture of Sex on Campus*. New York: Norton & Company.

Additional required & optional materials (primarily academic journal articles): Will be posted on NYU Classes a week prior to class.

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND GOALS

Approximately 60% of U.S. adults (and up to 80% of college students) report having engaged in at least one nonromantic sexual encounter (often known as casual sex or hooking up), yet this behavior remains socially stigmatized, clouded in stereotypes and misconceptions, and fraught with physical, emotional, and social risks. This course explored the psychology of this behavior, including the evolutionary, environmental, and situational origins of people's desires to engage in it, gender differences, mental health outcomes of casual sex, and various factors that can moderate the link between casual sex engagement and positive versus negative mental and physical health outcomes (such as pleasure, consent, unwanted attachment, social stigma, sexual health). We will examine these issues from a biopsychosocial perspective, focusing on empirical research drawn from evolutionary, social, developmental, and health psychology, and, to a lesser extent, also neuroscience, communications science, and sociology.

Class sessions will be largely discussion-based. Students will be asked to complete weekly thought pieces in which they will have the opportunity to further reflect upon the relevant research and critically examine the evidence. By the end of the semester, they should develop a greater understanding of what drives people's engagement in short-term mating, the potential outcomes this behavior can have, and the factors these outcomes depend on. At the same time, students will gain a better insight into their own sexual desires and behaviors, allowing them to make sexual decisions that are best suited for their specific needs.

TOPICS COVERED

Week 1 (Jan 23): **Intro**

Week 2 (Jan 30): **Casual sex definitions, prevalence, and the "sexual hookup culture"**

Week 3 (Feb 6): **Sociosexual orientation: Measurement, distribution, change**

Week 4 (Feb 13): **Gender differences– Evolutionary (incl Sexual Strategies Theory) and social influences**

Week 5 (Feb 20): **Individual differences – Biological factors and Life History Theory**

Week 6 (Feb 27): **Individual differences– Social & Situational factors**

Week 7 (Mar 6): **Sexual pleasure in hookups**

Week 8 (Mar 20): **Consent issues**

Week 9 (Mar 27): **Attachment issues**

Week 10 (Apr 3): **Sexual health issues**

Week 11 (Apr 10): **Mental health correlates of hookups**

Week 12 (Apr 17): **Role of technology in modern sex and love**

Week 13 (Apr 24): **Friendships & relationships during and post-hookups**

Week 14 (May 1): **Wrap-up**

COURSE EVALUATION

Your grade will consist of three components:

1.) Final Research Paper (50%)

Each student will complete a 10 page, APA-formatted paper on some aspect of casual sex. The topic can be related to material explicitly covered in class, but it does not necessarily have to be. You will have the freedom to choose a topic in the area of casual sex that is of inherent interest to you; however, you must receive instructor approval for your topic before you begin work on the paper. You will have the option of writing your paper as a research proposal for a study that you would potentially like to carry out, or as a critical review paper that mirrors what might be submitted to an academic journal. This paper is due on the last day of class.

2.) Reflection and Analysis Papers (40%)

Each student will complete a series of 10 reflection and analysis papers that are 1-2 pages in length. Each paper will be based upon the assigned readings for that week. The goal of these papers is to help you organize your thoughts on the readings and critically evaluate them prior to in-class discussions. Papers are due at the beginning of class each day. More detailed instructions for these papers will be posted on the course website.

Late papers will only be accepted in cases of legitimate personal or medical emergency. Students are required to notify the Instructor within 24 hours of the due date plus provide acceptable documentation of the emergency. If you are participating in an official, university-sanctioned event on a paper due date, your paper must be submitted early to receive maximum credit.

3.) Participation and Discussion Leading (10%)

This is seminar-type course, and therefore class attendance and participation is obligatory. Students who do not attend and/or do not actively participate on a regular basis will necessarily receive a lower participation score.

Grade Scale

A = 93-100%

C = 73-76.99%

B = 83-86.99%

D = 63-66.99%

A- = 90-92.99%

C- = 70-72.99%

B- = 80-82.99%

D- = 60-62.99%

B+ = 87-89.99%

D+ = 67-69.99%

C+ = 77-79.99%

F = less than 6

COURSE SCHEDULE

DATE	TOPIC AND READINGS
1/23	<p>Course Introduction No readings</p>
1/30	<p>Casual sex definitions, prevalence, and the “sexual hookup culture” - <i>American Hookup</i>, Chapters 1-5. - Garcia et al., (2012). Sexual hookup culture: A review. <i>Review of General Psychology</i>, 16, 161–176. (Read up to p. 169) - Wentland, J. J., & Reissing, E. D. (2011). Taking casual sex not too casually: Exploring definitions of casual sexual relationships. <i>Canadian Journal of Human Sexuality</i>, 20, 75-91. - Jonason, P. K. (2013). Four functions of four relationships: Consensus definitions of university students. <i>ASEB</i>, 42, 1407-1414. (optional)</p>
2/6	<p>Sociosexual orientation: Measurement, distribution, changes - Penke & Asendorpf (2008). Beyond global sociosexual orientations: A more differentiated look at sociosexuality and its effects on courtship and romantic relationships. <i>JPSP</i>, 95, 1113-1135. - Buss, D. M., & Schmitt, D. P. (1993). Sexual strategies theory: An evolutionary perspective on human mating. <i>Psychological Review</i>, 100, 204–232. *</p>
2/13	<p>Gender differences– Evolutionary and social influences - Conley, T. D., Ziegler, A., & Moors, A. C. (2011). Backlash in the bedroom: Stigma mediates gender differences in acceptance of casual sex offers. <i>Psychology of Women Quarterly</i>, 37, 392-407. - Conley (2010). Perceived proposer personality characteristics and gender differences in acceptance of casual sex offers. <i>JPSP</i>, 100, 309–329. - Lippa, R. A. (2009). Sex differences in sex drive, sociosexuality, and height across 53 nations: Testing evolutionary and social structural theories. <i>ASEB</i>, 38, 631–651.</p>
2/20	<p>Individual differences – Biological factors and Life History Theory - Bailey et al., (2000). Do individual differences in sociosexuality represent genetic or environmentally contingent strategies? Evidence from the Australian Twin Registry. <i>JPSP</i>, 78, 537-545. (optional) - Garcia JR et al. (2010). Associations between dopamine D4 receptor gene variation with both infidelity and sexual promiscuity. <i>PLoS ONE</i> 5(11): e14162. Gangestad, S. W., & Simpson, J. A. (2000). The evolution of human mating: Trade-offs and strategic pluralism. <i>Behavioral and Brain Sciences</i>, 23, 573–644. (Read up to p. 587; rest is optional)</p>
2/27	<p>Individual differences– Social, developmental & situational factors - Lyons et al., (2014). Young adult casual sexual behavior: Life-course-specific motivations and consequences. <i>Sociological Perspectives</i>, 57, 79-101. - Sonmez et al., (2006). Binge drinking and casual sex on spring break. <i>Annals of Tourism Research</i>, 33, 895-917. - Fielder et al (2013). Predictors of sexual hookups: A theory-based, prospective study of first-year college women. <i>ASEB</i>, 42, 1425–1441.</p>

3/6	<p>Pleasure in hookups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - American Hookup, Ch. 6-8 - Armstrong, E. A., England, P., & Fogarty, C. K. (2012). Accounting for women's orgasm and sexual enjoyment in college hookups and relationships. <i>American Sociological Review</i>, 77, 435–462. (optional)
3/13	<p>NO CLASS (SPRING BREAK)</p>
3/20	<p>Consent and coercion in hookups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - American Hookup, Ch. 9 - Peterson, Z. D., & Muehlenhard, C. L. (2007). Conceptualizing the “wantedness” of women's consensual and nonconsensual sexual experiences: Implications for how women label their experiences with rape. <i>Journal of Sex Research</i>, 44, 72–88. (READ ONLY Intro – p. 72-74 & Discussion, p.81-85). - Westerlund et al. (2010). Does unrestricted sociosexual behavior have a shared genetic basis with sexual coercion? <i>Psychology, Crime, & Law</i>, 16, 5-23. - Flack et al. (2007). Risk factors and consequences of unwanted sex among university students: Hooking up, alcohol, and stress response. <i>Journal of Interpersonal Violence</i>, 22, 139–157. (optional)
3/27	<p>Sexual health and hookups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Walsh et al. (2014). Do alcohol and marijuana use decrease the probability of condom use for college women? <i>JSR</i>, 51, 145-158. - Conley, T., Moors, A. C., Matsick, J. L., & Ziegler, A. (2015). Sexuality-related risks are judged more harshly than comparable health risks. <i>International Journal of Sexual Health</i>, 27, 508-521.
4/3	<p>Attachment & love in hookups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Townsend, J. M., & Wasserman, T. H. (2011). Sexual hookups among college students: Sex differences in emotional reactions. <i>ASEB</i>, 40, 1173–1181. - Rodrigue, C. et al., (2017). Passion, intimacy, and commitment in casual sexual relationships in a Canadian sample of emerging adults. <i>JSR</i>, online ahead of print.
4/10	<p>Mental health outcomes of hookups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Bersamin et al. (2014). Risky business: Is there an association between casual sex and mental health among emerging adults? <i>JSR</i>, 51, 43–51. - Deutsch, A. R., & Slutske, W. S. (2015). A noncausal relation between casual sex in adolescence and early adult depression and suicidal ideation: A longitudinal discordant twin study. <i>JSR</i>, 52, 770-780. - Vrangalova, Z., & Ong, A. (2014). Who benefits from casual sex? The moderating role of sociosexuality. <i>SPPS</i>, 5, 883-891,
4/17	<p>Role of technology in modern sex and love</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Miller, B. (2015). “They’re the modern-day gay bar”: Exploring the uses and gratifications of social networks for men who have sex with men. <i>Computers in Human Behavior</i>, 51, 476–482. - Sumter, S., Vandenbosch, L., & Ligtenberg, L. (2017) Love me Tinder: Untangling emerging adults' motivations for using the dating application Tinder. <i>Telematics and Informatics</i>, 34, 67-78. - Lehmillier, J. J., & loerger, M. (2014). Social networking smartphone applications and sexual health outcomes among men who have sex with men. <i>PLOS One</i>, 9, e86603.

4/24	<p>Friendships & relationships during and post-hookups</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - American Hookup, Ch. 10 - Owen, J., Fincham, F. D., & Manthos, M. (2013). Friendship after a Friends with Benefits relationship: Deception, psychological functioning, and social connectedness. <i>Archives of Sexual Behavior</i>, 42, 1443-1449. - Conley et al., (2017). Investigation of consensually nonmonogamous relationships: Theories, methods, and new directions. <i>Perspectives on Psychological Science</i>, 12, 205–232. (Read through p. 214; rest optional) - Rhoades, G. K., & Stanley, S. M. (2014). <i>Before “I Do:” What Do Premarital Experiences Have to Do with Marital Quality Among Today’s Young Adults?</i> The National Marriage Project at the University of Virginia.
5/1	<p>Course wrap-up</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - American Hookup, Conclusion <p>FINAL PAPER DUE</p>

Note: Readings should be completed before class on the day they are listed.