### Psychology of Human Sexuality

### Course Syllabus

## Psychology 231, section 001, CRN 59353, 3 credit-hours

## Spring 2019, University of New Mexico

## Tuesdays & Thursdays 11:00 am – 12:15 pm

**Classroom: Kiva 104, UNM Main Campus**

**Teacher:**

**Geoffrey Miller, Ph.D.; Associate Professor of Psychology, UNM**

Office hours: Tuesdays 1:30-2:30 pm, in Logan Hall 160

[gfmiller@unm.edu](mailto:gfmiller@unm.edu), 277-1967 (office)

**Teaching Assistant:**

**Tessa Cappelle, Psychology Ph.D. student**

Office hours: By appointment, Logan Hall B68F (basement level)

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**Overview of syllabus and course content**

**This syllabus will be crucial to your success in this course. Read this whole syllabus before the second class meets. Refer to it regularly throughout the course.**

Sexuality is central to our lives. It leads to our most important relationships – with lovers, spouses, and children. It drives much of our social-networking, status-seeking, and consumer behavior. It evokes our strongest passions — lust, love, pride, hope, and ecstasy, but also jealousy, heartbreak, despair, shame, and regret.

This course introduces the psychology of human sexuality in its evolutionary, historical, cultural, reproductive, social, and ethical contexts. We’ll explore:

* The history, nature, and challenges of sex research
* Sexually transmitted organisms and sexual health
* The origins and functions of sexual reproduction, sexual evolution
* Mate choice, sexual selection theory, and signaling theory
* Physical attraction and social attraction
* Sexual arousal, orgasm, and pleasure
* Sexual activities: masturbation, foreplay, copulation
* Sexual competition and mating markets
* Sexual jealousy, pair-bonding, and mate-guarding
* Ovulatory cycles and estrus
* Sexual conflict, sexual assault, alternative mating strategies, psychopathy
* Sex differences, cross-sex empathy, gender, and feminism
* Homosexuality, bisexuality, and sexual fluidity
* BDSM, kink, and unusual sexual preferences
* Sexual barter, material proof, prostitution, pornography, sexbots
* Sexual selection for mental health, intelligence, conscientiousness, and commitment
* Sexual morality, mating ethics, consent, and virtue-signaling
* Romantic love and romantic proof
* Sexual relationships, marriage, and monogamy
* Polyamory and open relationships
* The future of sexuality

This course will focus on sexual psychology, behaviors, emotions, and relationships. It will not be a remedial ‘sex education’ course, so will not focus very much on medical, clinical, or health issues such as genital anatomy, contraception, pregnancy, or sexual dysfunctions.

**This course's distinctive challenges**

**This course presents some striking new theories and data about sex, which is one of the most emotionally-charged, controversial areas of human behavior, culture, and morality**.This course includes detailed lectures, readings, quizzes, discussions, and videos about explicit topics. It covers not just vanilla, consensual, long-term, monogamous, heterosexual relationships, but also short-term affairs, infidelity, and jealousy; sexual coercion; masturbation, oral sex, and anal sex; sex in other species with strange mating systems; sex in other cultures; sexually-transmitted infections; pornography and prostitution; gay and lesbian sex; polyamory, kink, and unusual sexual preferences. If you are not open to learning about these topics in an open-minded, scientific way, this is not the right course for you*.*

**Also, this course views human sexuality in the context of evolutionary biology, animal behavior, sexual selection theory, and behavior genetics; the implications of this evolutionary-genetic perspective might conflict with some of your religious or political beliefs**. Evolutionary approaches to human sexuality are based on evolutionary biology, the fossil evidence for human evolution, our behavioral similarities to other primates, and other theories and facts. Its perspective and its implications can be hard to reconcile with belief in the literal truth of creation stories from various religions. Whatever your religious beliefs, you’ll need to master and discuss the course material as it's presented.

This evolutionary perspective also challenges some common assumptions that human sexuality is a “blank slate” influenced mostly by parenting, culture, and media. If you have a strong gender feminist view that all sex differences are socially constructed, or a cultural relativist belief that all sexual norms have equal moral validity, you’ll face some interesting challenges reconciling the course content with your political beliefs.

Bearing in mind these warnings, I am happy to discuss in a mutually respectful way any of your concerns, and I will seek workable solutions that reconcile your right to religious and political freedom of belief, my right to academic freedom in teaching, and the university's need to maintain intellectual standards in teaching and grading.

**Required materials: iClicker 2 and three textbooks**

**iClicker 2.** If you don’t already own one, these areabout $53 new from UNM bookstore. You must get an iclicker 2 rather than an iclicker (original) or an iclicker plus – only an iclicker 2 will allow you to take the polls in this course. You must register your iclicker 2 for this class by midnight Monday evening Jan. 21, so you can use it in class on Tues Jan 22. For instructions on registering, see the UNM Learn site instructions under ‘Register your iclicker’.

**Readings** for this class will be from three books that you’ll need to buy: one human sexuality textbook and two popular science books on evolutionary approaches to sexuality, plus about eight journal articles that are uploaded on UNM Learn.

**1) Discovering human sexuality (4th edition)** (2018) by Simon LeVay, Janice Baldwin, & John Baldwin. Sunderland, MA: Sinauer, ISBN-13: 978-1605352756 (looseleaf if possible)

* UNM Bookstore: $95 new, $75 used; Amazon: $94 new
* This is the best-written, most evolutionarily-oriented textbook on human sexuality.
* By getting the looseleaf edition, you can just bring the relevant chapter(s) to each class for the open-book quizzes, rather than having to carry the whole paperback around. I recommend buying two 3-ring binders for the textbook: a thicker one to keep the whole looseleaf textbook, and a thinner one to bring to class just containing the reading for each day.

# 2) Why women have sex: Women reveal the truth about their sex lives, from adventure to revenge (and everything in between) (2010). By Cindy Meston & David Buss. New York: St. Martin’s Griffin. ISBN-13: 978-0312662653 (paperback)

* UNM Bookstore: about $22 new, $14 used; Amazon.com: $20 new, $6 used, $8 Kindle
* An empirically-based exploration of female sexuality by a leading sex researcher and an evolutionary psychologist.

**3) What women want** (2016) by Tucker Max and Geoffrey Miller. New York: Anchor Books, ISBN-13 978-0316375337 (paperback)

* UNM Bookstore: $17 new, $14 used; Amazon.com: $10 new, $6 used
* This is our recent book of dating advice for young straight men, but it's based on scientific insights and evidence that apply to everybody's mating strategies.
* Warning: This book is written in a very blunt, candid, self-help style; it includes profanity, jokes, satire, and politically incorrect observations

**Notes on the readings**:

* Beyond the three required textbooks, there will be about half a dozen journal articles to read. These will be uploaded on UNM Learn.
* Important: weekly assigned readings before each class will take about two or three hours. If you don’t do the readings conscientiously, you won’t learn much in this course, and you won’t get a good grade.
* After each reading assignment listed in the course schedule below, I give the page count for the actual text you’ll need to read (excluding boxes to skip, or journal article references), so you can plan your reading times.
* Read the assignments in the order listed for each class; they’ll make more sense.
* Read when you’re awake and attentive. Read assignments in plenty of time before the class when they’ll be discussed. Take notes on them. Digest them. Be ready to discuss them with your peers in class.
* The online quizzes are open-book, so it will be helpful to use underlining or highlighting while reading so you can locate key ideas, terms, and findings during the quizzes.

**Class structure**

In class, we’ll have lectures, discussions, videos, and iclicker polls that will serve as attendance and participation checks. There will be a brief break halfway through class.

Lectures: For about half of each class, I’ll be lecturing with Powerpoint slides and occasional video clips. Usually I won’t repeat the material in the readings, but will talk about additional ideas, perspectives, theories, historical contexts, empirical findings, and course content in relation to current events and social issues.

iClicker polls: Throughout class, there will be iClicker polls to check whether you’re present and paying attention. It doesn’t matter what you respond, only that you do respond. Answering these iClicker polls will determine your class attendance and participation grade.

Class rules

Your classmates deserve your civility, respect, and cooperation. Many UNM students have worked hard to get to this university, work hard to get the grades and pay the tuition to stay here, and have many conflicting responsibilities, such as part-time work, children, spouses, elderly parents, volunteer work, sports, etc. UNM tuition and fee rates are about $250 per credit-hour for NM residents, so this 3 credit-hour class costs about $750, or about $50 for each of our 15 class meetings; for non-NM-residents, it’s over $170 per class. Please appreciate how much your classmates are paying to be here, and the sacrifices they have made to attend UNM. To help everybody learn as much as they can from this course, there are some class rules, which I enforce strictly:

* Do not arrive late. Near the start of each class, there will be an iClicker participation check to see who has arrived on time. It is best to have a seat and be ready for class by five minutes before class. Learn how long you’ll need to find parking.
* Do not leave early. Each class ends with another attendance check to see who has stayed for the whole class. Do not start to pack up your notes and books before class ends, unless we’re clearly finished with class early, or if you have a genuine emergency.
* Do not talk to other students in class while I’m lecturing. If someone else around you talks too much, or disturbs your concentration in any other way, please let me know.
* During discussions, be thoughtful, respectful, and constructive. Discuss issues based on theories and evidence, not just personal anecdotes and opinions.
* Do not eat food or chew gum in class. It’s distracting to other students. Safely sealed drinks (e.g. coffee cups with lids or water bottles) are OK to bring.
* Turn off mobile phones and electronic entertainment devices in class. Do not use them to call, text, engage with social media, or web-surf. If you must remain available for a child or other dependent, set your phone to vibrate. To protect the privacy of everyone in class, do not record audio or video in class. If you see someone recording, let me know.
* Do not come to class if you are too tired or ill to participate properly; do not come if you have a cold and are likely to be infectious. We’ll excuse absences for illness given a doctor’s note.
* If you are a parent: If you need to bring a baby or young child to class occasionally, that’s OK, but please alert me before class when you do. Older children may not be appropriate to bring to class, given the sexual content.
* If you are on a UNM sports team, please let the TA know in advance when you will need to miss classes and quizzes due to travel and sports events.

**Accommodation Statement.** Accessibility Services (Mesa Vista Hall 2021, 277-3506) provides academic support to students who have disabilities. If you think you may need any accommodations, such as alternative accessible formats for undertaking and completing coursework, you should contact this service right away to assure your needs are met in a timely manner. If you need local assistance in contacting Accessibility Services, see the Bachelor and Graduate Programs office.

**Grades**

**Your grade for this course will depend on two things:**

* **40%: attendance and participation (A&P) checks in every class through iClicker.** We’ll keep track of what % of the time you answer iclicker questions during class. You’ll get a percentage grade for each class, and these will add up across classes to determine 40% of your overall grade.
* **60%: weekly online quizzes through UNM Learn/Blackboard.** There will beabout 14weekly online quizzes on UNM Learn/Blackboard. These will add up to determine 60% of your overall grade.

So you can know how well you are doing, every attendance score and quiz grade will be posted on the UNM Learn site as the grade is entered in our records.

At the end of term, there will be a fairly generous grading curve to determine final course grades. In previous versions of this class, the class average was about a B or B+, although the grade average out of 100 points was only in the 70s (e.g. averaging about 70% on attendance and quizzes.) There will also be a couple of options for extra credit, discussed below.

**Attendance & participation (A&P) checks in every class with iClicker: 40% of final grade**

There will be about half a dozen iClicker ‘attendance and participation’ (A&P) checks throughout each class, starting after 11:00 am, and continuing until the end of class around 12:15. To get A&P points for a class, you’ll need to have your iClicker registered, with you, charged, and ready to hand. We won’t keep track of what specific answers you give to any polls in class – those are totally confidential, and the anonymity of your answers is fully protected. However, we will keep track of what percentage of polls you answer. If you answer every poll in a class, you’ll get a maximum of 10 A&P points for that class. If you answer at least one poll, you’ll get a minimum of 2 A&P points. If you answer none, we’ll assume you’re absent, and you’ll get zero A&P points. We’ll add up you’re A&P points across all the class from Jan 22 onwards, which will be about 27 classes and 270 A&P points; these will determine 40% of your final grade. The A&P points will encourage regular attendance, and active engagement, so you get the benefits out of being at a real university with real students and a real professor – rather than just reading textbooks at home, or taking an online course.

**Weekly online quizzes through UNM Learn: 60% of final grade.**

Every week, there will be an online quiz that you’ll complete through UNM Learn. From Jan 18 onwards, these will be made available every Friday at noon, and you’ll need to complete them by midnight the next Monday.

Every quiz will include 20 multiple-choice questions based on course readings and lectures. Quizzes will be open-book and open-notes: you can refer to readings, notes from lectures, and lecture powerpoints. However, tests will be timed with a 30-minute limit (one and a half minutes per question), so you’ll need to be familiar enough with the readings and lectures that you can find information quickly.

There is no penalty for guessing. Each correct answer is worth one point, plus you’ll get a bonus of 5 points just for completing each quiz, so each quiz is worth 25 points total. Grades on the 14 or so quizzes will be added up at the end of term, for a maximum of 350 quiz points, and these will determine 60% of your final grade. Thus, each of the quiz is worth about 4% of your course grade. Do not panic if you miss one or two – most students do.

Each quiz will cover the previous week’s readings and class lectures and discussions. If you read the assignments carefully and pay attention in class, you will probably do well on the quizzes. If you miss a class, you’ll be able to download the lecture Powerpoint from UNM Learn, but you’ll miss whatever I said that wasn’t on the Powerpoint slides, and whatever we talked about in class. This makes class attendance very important.

The quiz questions will range from very easy to quite hard. Most of the questions should be easy if you have kept up with readings and lectures. There may be a couple of questions that require a bit of thought, and which I do not expect most students to get right. If you consistently get at least 70% on the quizzes, you are doing very well, and would probably get at least a B in the course.

Take the quizzes by yourself, without help from anyone else. Violations will be subject to the normal university procedures and penalties.

Quiz answers will be revealed on UNM Learn after you finish each quiz, so you’ll have immediate feedback on how well you did. These quizzes will help you give you quick feedback about how well you’re doing all the way through the term, so you can improve your study habits if you are not happy with your quiz grades. Also, taking many little quizzes rather than a few big exams gives a more reliable assessment of how well you really know the material; since your grade is less vulnerable to random disruptions like getting a cold before an exam.

**Extra credit**

You have two options for getting extra credit in this class (choose one or the other):

**Research participation**: Like in Psych 105, you can get extra credit for participating in psychology research within our department. For each hour of research participation credit, you can get 10 extra credit points, You’re limited to four (4) hours credit maximum, or a maximum of 40 extra credit points compared to the 600 points maximum from A&P and quiz points. Thus, extra credit can raise your course grade up to 7%, e.g. from a B to an A-. Instructions for research participation through the SONA system will be uploaded to UNM Learn.

**Movie reports**: these are one-page, single-spaced analyses of how the course content relates to a movie about human sexuality. There will be a list of about 10 possible movies to chose from for this course, such as *Kinsey* (2004), *Her* (2013), *Carol* (2015), or *Professor Marston and the Wonder Women* (2017). These movie reports can be uploaded on UNM Learn, and you can do a maximum of one movie report, for a maximum of 40 points of extra credit. Instructions for writing movie reports will be uploaded to UNM Learn.

**How to ace this course**

It should be easy to get a good grade in this class, if you attend class regularly, keep up with the readings, answer the quizzes thoughtfully, participate in class discussions, and think about what you are learning. If you read the assignments and listen closely to the lectures and peer discussions, you will probably do very well on the quizzes. There are also opportunities for substantial extra credit with research participation or movie reports. I love giving A’s to students who learn a lot and who think about their lives and relationships in new ways.

On the other hand, if you treat this course as a soft option, you will do badly. If you skip lectures, fail to do your assigned readings, don’t take the quizzes seriously, and don’t engage with class polls and discussions, you will get a disappointing grade. I am not afraid to give a C, D, or F to someone who deserves one.

You will get a lot of ongoing feedback in this course: about 27 A&P scores and about 14 quiz grades. If you find that you are coming to class and doing the work, but are not doing as well on these as you would wish, please email or see me or the TA to discuss how you can do better. We will be glad to help.

**Provisional Course Schedule: List of readings, assignments, and topics for each class**

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No readings required before the first class

1: Jan 15 **Introduction to course content**

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Before this class:

Required readings (about 30 pages):

* Meston & Buss, Introduction, pp. xi-xxii (12 pages)
* Max & Miller Introduction, pp. 3-6 (4 pages)
* This syllabus

2: Jan 17 **Introduction to course mechanics**

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Before this class:

* Register your iclicker on UNM Learn
* Complete the first online quiz by Mon Jan 21 midnight on UNM Learn, covering all the readings for last week including the syllabus, plus the first two lectures

Required readings (17 pages)

* Levay Ch. 1: Sexuality: pathways to understanding, pp. 4-20, including box 1.3 (boxes 1.1 are 1.2 are optional—will not be covered in the quiz) (16 pages)

3: Jan 22 **The science of sex**

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Required readings (40 pages)

* Levay Ch. 15: Sexually transmitted infections, pp. 467-496 (boxes 15.1, 15.2, and 15.3 are optional) 27 pages)

4: Jan 24 **Sexually transmitted organisms**

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Required readings (40 pages)

* + - Max & Miller Ch. 4: Understand what women want … and why, pp. 69-78 (10 pages)
    - Max & Miller Ch. 10: Show them what you’re working with (Signaling Theory), pp. 165-172 (8 pages)
    - Meston & Buss, Ch. 7: A sense of adventure, pp. 145-166 (22 pp)

5: Jan 29 **Mate choice and signaling**

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Required readings (20 pages)

* + - Levay Appendix A: Sex and evolution, pp. 564-583 (20 pp)

6: Jan 31 **Sex and evolution**

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Required readings (37 pages)

* Meston & Buss, Ch. 1: What turns women on? pp. 1-27 (27 pp)
* Levay Ch. 5: Attraction, arousal, and response: Sections on attraction, pp. 124-135 (box 5.1 is optional) (10 pp)

7: Feb 5 **Physical attraction**

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Required readings (31 pages)

* Max & Miller Ch. 11: The power of popularity and prestige (Social proof), pp. 173-185 (13 pp)
* Max & Miller Ch. 13: Stylin’ and profilin’ (Aesthetic proof), pp. 196-213 (18 pp)

8: Feb 7 **Social attraction**

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Required readings (37 pages)

* Meston & Buss, Ch. 2: The pleasure of it, pp. 28-49 (22 pp)
* Levay Ch. 5: sections on arousal and orgasm, pp.135-151, including box 5.2 (boxes 5.3 and 5.4 are optional) (15 pp)

9: Feb 12 **Sexual arousal, orgasm, and pleasure**

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Required readings (30 pages)

* Levay Ch. 6 Sexual behavior pp. 156-187, including box 6.1 & box 6.3 (boxes 6.2 and 6.4 are optional) (30 pages)

10: Feb 14 **Sexual activities**

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Required readings (34 pages)

* + Meston & Buss, Ch. 4: The thrill of conquest, pp. 78-98 (21 pp)
  + Max & Miller Ch. 15: Find the right mating markets, pp. 231-246 (13 pp)

11: Feb 19 **Sexual competition and mating markets**

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Required readings (22 pages)

* + Meston & Buss, Ch. 5: Green-eyed desire, pp. 99-116 (18 pp)
  + Finkel, E. J., & Eastwick, P. W. (2015). Attachment and pairbonding. *Current Opinion in Behavioral Sciences, 3*, 7-11 (4 pp)

12: Feb 21 **Sexual jealousy**

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Required readings (12 pages)

* Levay Ch. 2: pp. 38(bottom)-44(bottom) (including box 2.4 on feedback loops and table 2.1 on hormones) (7 pages)
* Gangestad, S. W., & Haselton, M. G. (2015). Human estrus: Implications for relationship science. *Current Opinion in Psychology, 1*, 45-51. (5 pp)

13: Feb 26 **Ovulatory cycles**

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Required readings (39 pages)

* Max & Miller Ch. 9: The tender defender (The agreeable & assertive traits), pp. 148-161 (14 pp)
* Meston & Buss, Ch. 10: The dark side, pp. 211-235 (25 pp)

14: Feb 28 **Sexual conflict and alternative mating strategies**

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Required readings (30 pages)

* Levay Ch. 16: Sexual assault, harassment, and partner violence 500-529 (30 pp)

15: March 5 **Sexual assault**

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Required readings (28 pages)

* Max & Miller Ch 2: Understand what it’s like to be a woman, pp. 30-49 (20 pp)
* Schmitt, D. P., et al. (2017). Personality and gender differences in global perspective. International J. of Psychology, 52, S1, 45-56. (8 pp)

16: March 7 **Sex differences and cross-sex empathy**

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Spring break March 11-15: No classes March 12 or 14

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Required readings (19 pages)

* Levay Ch. 4: Sexual development and diversity, pp. 88-107(bottom), including box 4.2 (box 4.1 is optional) (19 pages)

17: March 19 **Sex, gender, and feminism**

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Required readings (29 pages)

* Levay Ch. 12: Sexual orientation pp. 372-401, including boxes 12.1, 12.2, and 12.5 (boxes 12.3 and 12.4 are optional) (29 pp)

18: March 21 **Homosexuality and bisexuality**

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Required readings (26 pages)

* Levay Ch. 13: Atypical sexuality: pp. 406-434, including box 13.1 (boxes 13.2, 13.3, 13.4, 13.5 are optional) (26 pp)

19: March 26 **BDSM and unusual sexual preferences**

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Required readings (34 pages)

* + Meston & Buss, Ch. 8: Barter and trade, pp. 167-190 (24 pp)
  + Max & Miller Ch. 12: How rich do you need to be? (Material proof), pp. 186-195 (10 pp)

20: March 28 **Sexual barter, trade, and material proof**

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Required readings (34 pages)

* Levay Ch. 17: Sex work, pp. 534-560, including boxes 17.1 and 17.2 (boxes 17.3 and 17.4, are optional) (26 p)
* Salmon, C. (2012). The pop culture of sex: An evolutionary window on the worlds of pornography and romance. *Review of General Psychology, 16*(2), 152-160. (7 pp)

21: April 4 **Sexual consumerism and the sex industry**

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Required readings (50 pages)

* + Max & Miller Ch. 6: Get happy (The mental health trait), pp. 99-116 (18 pp)
  + Max & Miller Ch. 7: Smarten up (The intelligence trait), pp. 117-134 (17 pp)
  + Max & Miller Ch. 18: Talking to women, pp. 277-291 (15 pp)

22: April 9 **Sexual selection for mental traits**

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Required readings (41 pages)

* + Meston & Buss, Ch. 6: The call of duty, pp. 117-144 (28 pp)
  + Max & Miller Ch. 8: Get your life together (The willpower trait), pp. 135-147 (13 pp)

23: April 11 **Conscientiousness and commitment**

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Required readings (38 pages)

* Max & Miller Ch. 3: Clarify your mating goals and ethics, pp. 50-66 (17 pp)
* Miller, G. F. (2007). Sexual selection for moral virtues. *Quarterly Review of Biology*, *82*(2), 97-117. (21 pp)

24: April 16 **Sexual morality**

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Required readings (41 pages)

* Meston & Buss, Ch. 3: The thing called love, pp. 50-77 (28 pp)
* Max & Miller Ch. 14: Show her how you feel (Romantic proof), pp. 214-227 (13 pp)

25: April 18 **Romantic love and romantic proof**

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Required readings (30 pages)

* Levay Ch. 7: Sexual relationships pp. 192-222, including box 7.2 and 7.3 (boxes 7.1 and 7.4 are optional) (30 pp)

26: April 23 **Sexual relationships**

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Required readings (28 pages)

* Levay Ch. 11: Sexuality across the lifespan: Adulthood, pp. 342-359 (middle), including box 11.1 (box 11.2 is optional) (17 pages)
* Henrich et al. (2012). The puzzle of monogamous marriage. *Phil. Trans.Royal Society of London B, 367*, 657-669. (11 pp)

27: April 25 **Marriage and monogamy**

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Required readings (16 pages)

* Weitzman, G., Davidson, J., & Phillips, R. A. (2009). *What psychology professionals should know about polyamory*. Baltimore, MD: National Coalition for Sexual Freedom. (Read pp. 7-23). (16 pp)

28: April 30 **Polyamory and open relationships**

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Required readings:

* Fleischman, D. (2018). Uncanny vulvas. (Blog on sex bots). *Jacobite*, April 24. (5 pages)
* ***Additional reading TBA***

29: May 2 **The future of sexuality**

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Final exams May 6-10: No final exams in this class