



PSB 4731

Biopsychology of Sexual Behavior

Spring 2024



Instructor: Adam E. Tratner, PhD

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Meeting Times: Monday & Wednesday 4:00pm - 5:15pm

Classroom: Room 204

Office Hours: Friday 10:00am - 11:00am & by appointment.

Course Description

Humans are, by nature, sexual beings; evolved biological organisms that sexually reproduce. This course explores human sexuality through the lens of biopsychology, a subdiscipline that examines the interplay of biological mechanisms, mental processes, and behavior. To that end, this course covers a range of topics including, but not limited to, the nature and evolution of biological sex, mating systems, sexual development, sexual behavior, romantic partner preferences, attraction, love, romantic relationships, infidelity, sexual orientation, and sexual conflict.

Student Learning Goals

- Apply principles of evolutionary biology to the study of human sexuality.
- Analyze and summarize primary academic sources relevant to the discipline.
- Describe, explain, and make predictions about the underlying biological and psychological factors that give rise to sexual behavior.
- Demonstrate an understanding of normal variability in human sexuality (e.g., sexual orientation) versus harmful sexual expression (e.g., sexual coercion, paraphilia).

The above student learning goals will be assessed through performance on written and oral assessments.

Materials

Canvas: Assignments, announcements, supplemental resources, grades, and other things will be posted to and available through Canvas (<http://canvas.fsu.edu>).

Required Readings: Available to download for free on Canvas.



Disclaimer

This course deals with sexually explicit content and topics that may make people uncomfortable. Some material in this course may touch on issues of personal relevance and/or may be personally upsetting – topics such as sexual orientation, sex differences, sexual assault, etc. Furthermore, some content may challenge your beliefs about human sexuality. The goal of this class is not to tell you what to think; rather, this class will introduce you to prominent theories and cutting-edge research so that you can cultivate a well-informed and nuanced understanding of human sexuality.

Course Content

All course content is available on Canvas. This includes required readings, assessments, and supplemental materials. All assessments can be accessed and completed via Canvas. See the course schedule below for specific due dates.

Grade Determination

The class is out of 400 total points split between 5 grade categories:

Attendance	Weekly Quizzes	Article Summaries	Discussion Questions	Hotseat	Course Total
30 points	100 points	150 points	90 points	30 points	400 points

30 points – Attendance: Attending class sessions is mandatory. Each class that you attend is worth 1 point.

100 points – Weekly Quizzes: From Weeks 2-13, there will be a quiz (~10 questions) that assesses your knowledge/understanding of the information presented in the lectures and reading(s) during the previous week. **All weekly quizzes are due by 4:00pm on Monday**, and can be found in the "Quizzes" tab on Canvas. Each weekly quiz is worth 10 points. You will only earn full credit if you complete your quiz on time, and attend Monday's class session.

150 points – Article Summaries: Every week, you will read peer-reviewed journal articles (e.g., research studies), and then answer questions about their purpose, methodology, findings, concepts, and/or theories. The articles will be posted under the weekly modules (see: Modules tab on Canvas) as well as embedded within the assignments. Article summary assignments can be found in the "Assignments" tab on Canvas, and each article summary is worth 10 points.

90 points – Discussion Questions: Every Wednesday you are required to submit 3 discussion questions. You can pose any questions (and I mean ANY) about the lectures, assigned readings, or how the course topics relate to the real world. You will only earn full credit if you pose "thoughtful" questions (i.e., they cannot be answered with a simple yes or no), submit your discussion questions on time, and attend Wednesday's class session. Grades will be assigned based on the degree to which the questions reflect critical thinking and thoughtful reflection of course material. Each set of three questions is worth 5 points can be found in the "Assignments" tab on Canvas.

30 points - The Hotseat: On two separate occasions, each student will summarize the assigned reading verbally for the entire class in ~15 minutes or less. Students will sign up for their two dates at the start of the semester. Grades will be assigned based on the accuracy, clarity, and conciseness of their summary of the reading. Each day that you are on the hotseat is worth 15 points.

- In this class, students can freely discuss controversial/taboo topics without judgment. Nothing is too sacred to discuss here. But keep in mind that many students come from different backgrounds, have different views, and have different life experiences. We all have unique perspectives to share with one another. It is essential that students engage with one another in a respectful manner. Insulting and belittling other students (or someone's sexual proclivities) will not be tolerated. Disrespectful behavior will be addressed by (1) a general announcement, (2) direct announcement, (3) or a request to leave the class if the derogation is serious enough or persists.

Grade Calculator

Percent Grade	Letter Grade
92-100%	A
90-91%	A-
88-89%	B+
82-87%	B
80-81%	B-
78-79%	C+
72-77%	C
70-71%	C-
68-69%	D+
62-67%	D
60-61%	D-
≤59%	F

Course Expectations

General Expectations

All correspondence (emails, meetings, phone calls) must be in **English**. It is expected that students devote roughly **10 hours** per week on this course, split between attending classes, completing assignments, studying, reading, and meeting with the professor (if needed). Students are expected to complete all assignments individually unless otherwise stated.

Expectations for Students

- (1) Have a reliable internet connected computer with the most updated Canvas-compatible web browsers (e.g., Chrome, Firefox, Safari, Edge). You may also need up-to-date versions of a Flash player, Java, and a PDF viewer (e.g., Adobe).
- (2) Have a backup plan to be able to log in from another computer or another location in the event that your computer crashes or internet goes down. Plan ahead for taking quizzes and submitting assignments!
- (3) Log in to Canvas at least 3-5 times a week; checking Canvas daily is recommended.
- (4) Follow the calendar of events and complete all of the quizzes assignments by their deadlines.
- (5) Respond to emails within 24 hours during weekdays (48 hours on weekends).
- (6) Participate in a thoughtful and polite manner.

(7) Observe proper classroom etiquette by respecting each other's privacy, using constructive criticism, and refraining from derogatory/inflammatory comments.

Expectations for the Instructor

- (1) I (the instructor) will log in to the course daily and will alert students if I will be absent [this is unlikely to happen].
- (2) I (the instructor) will respond to your questions, concerns, and emails within 24 hours [48 hours on weekends].
- (3) I (the instructor) will grade all assignments in a timely manner [within 2-3 days].

***SUDDEN LOSS OF INTERNET ACCESS*:**

If you lose access to a reliable internet connection, it is necessary to contact me as soon as possible. Without internet, you will be unable to complete quizzes and submit assignments. If you cannot reach me by email in the event of an emergency, you may call me or send me a message on WhatsApp. The sooner that I am aware of your situation, the faster I can guide you towards resources to obtain internet access and work with you to come up with a solution.

Technical Support

If you are unfamiliar with the Canvas platform, are or are unsure of how to navigate the online resources, or are experiencing other technical difficulties, here are some useful resources:

- FSU Information Technology Services: <https://its.fsu.edu/its-service-desk>

For more Canvas tutorials and learning support:

- <https://community.canvaslms.com/t5/Student-Guide/tkb-p/student>

Course Policies

Class Attendance Policy

Students who do not attend the first class meeting will be dropped from the course by the academic department that offers the course. This policy applies to all levels of courses and to all campuses and study centers. It remains the student's responsibility to verify course drops and check that fees are adjusted.

Tardiness (defined as showing up more than 5-minutes late after the start of class) and Absence will result in harsh penalties to your grade unless you have a legitimate excuse (and documentation to corroborate it). Unexcused Absence and Tardiness will negate your attendance grade for that day. Unexcused Tardiness will result in a 50% penalty to the total points on all assessments due that day. Unexcused absence will result in a loss of all points possible that day.

If you miss class for any reason, you are responsible for staying up-to date on the required readings and catching up on missed lecture material. If you fail to submit an assessment, you cannot make it up (unless you have a legitimate excuse and documentation to show it). I strongly recommend that you get the names, phone numbers, and email addresses of at least 3 people in this class from whom you can get missed notes.

University Attendance Policy

Excused absences include documented illness, deaths in the immediate family and other documented crises, call to active military duty or jury duty, religious holy days, and official University activities. These absences will be accommodated in a way that does not arbitrarily penalize students who have a valid excuse. Consideration will also be given to students whose dependent children experience serious illness.

Late or Missed Quizzes & Assignments

All coursework is due BEFORE the assigned due dates indicated on the course schedule. Late work will NOT be accepted unless you have a legitimate excuse (note: *prolonged* loss of internet access is legitimate). If you cannot attend a class session or submit an assessment for any reason, inform me as far in advance as possible (e.g., for religious holidays or University events) but no sooner than two days (48 hours) in advance. If it is not possible to notify me in advance (e.g., for last-minute illness or emergency), contact me by email as soon as possible. The professor has the right to ask for documentation to corroborate your excuse. All makeups must occur as soon as possible.

Grade Disputes

If something seems wrong with your grade, please bring it to my attention as soon as possible. Honest mistakes do occasionally happen. If you would like to dispute a grade, you will have 7 days to bring your grade dispute to my attention. However, in order for me to amend your grade, you cannot simply state that I am wrong; you must appeal to me using concrete evidence and/or logical reasoning for why you deserve a better grade.

Student Eligibility for an Incomplete Grade

Incomplete (“I”) grades will not be assigned, except in the case of exceptional unforeseen circumstances that occur within the last three weeks of the semester and your work has otherwise been satisfactory (C average).

Academic Honor Policy

The Florida State University Academic Honor Policy outlines the University’s expectations for the integrity of students’ academic work, the procedures for resolving alleged violations of those expectations, and the rights and responsibilities of students and faculty members throughout the process. Students are responsible for reading the Academic Honor Policy and for living up to their pledge to “. . . be honest and truthful and . . . [to] strive for personal and institutional integrity at Florida State University.” Florida State University Academic Honor Policy, found at <http://fda.fsu.edu/Academics/Academic-Honor-Policy>.

Plagiarism is the unauthorized use of other people’s intellectual product. Borrowing material from other sources without giving credit to the original author shows disrespect for intellectual property, it and will not be tolerated. Plagiarism can take several forms: careless paraphrasing that maintains a considerable part from the original without quotation marks; downloading essays from a web site and using them as one’s own; having someone else write an essay; “forgetting” to place quotation marks around a borrowed passage; paraphrasing a document and including it in your work without citing the original source. Whenever you decide to consult secondary sources, do so responsibly: give credit to the author by indicating the source, and quote appropriately. Any written work that shows signs of plagiarism will receive a failing score without any opportunity to make up. Repeated cases of plagiarism may result in a failing grade.

Please be aware that using social media to collaborate on and share course exams or assignments with other students that are not identified by the course instructor as group work is a violation of the FSU Academic Honor Policy.

Special Considerations & Americans With Disabilities Act

Florida State University (FSU) values diversity and inclusion; we are committed to a climate of mutual respect and full participation. Our goal is to create learning environments that are usable, equitable, inclusive, and welcoming. FSU is committed to providing reasonable accommodations for all persons with disabilities in a manner that is consistent with academic standards of the course while empowering the student to meet integral requirements of the course.

To receive academic accommodations, a student:

- (1) Must register with and provide documentation to the Office of Accessibility Services (OAS);
- (2) Must provide a letter from OAS to the instructor indicating the need for accommodation and what type; and,
- (3) Should communicate with the instructor, as needed, to discuss recommended accommodations. A request for a meeting may be initiated by the student or the instructor.

Please note that instructors are not allowed to provide classroom accommodations to a student until appropriate verification from the Office of Accessibility Services has been provided. This syllabus and other class materials are available in alternative format upon request. For more information about services available to FSU students with disabilities please visit the Office of Accessibility Services website (<https://dsst.fsu.edu/oas>), or contact the office directly:

874 Traditions Way
108 Student Services Building
Florida State University
Tallahassee, FL 32306-4167
(850) 644-9566 (voice)
(850) 644-8504 (TDD)
oas@fsu.edu
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/oas>

Tutoring & Other Assistance

The Writing Center of FSU Panama can provide support with your essays and research projects. Additionally, the Reading/Writing Center of FSU located in Tallahassee can provide tutoring online. For more information and appointments visit: <http://wr.english.fsu.edu/Reading-Writing-Center/RWC-Online>. If you have questions about any aspect of this class or any aspect of the assignments, please reach out to me. A wealth of resources on research guides, and citation styles can be found through the FSU libraries online: www.lib.fsu.edu

Confidential Campus Resources

Various centers and programs are available to assist students with navigating stressors that might impact academic success. These include the following:

Victim Advocate Program
University Center A, Rm. 4100
(850) 644-7161
Available 24/7/365
Office Hours: M-F 8-5
<https://dsst.fsu.edu/vap>

Counseling and Psychological Services
Askew Student Life Center, 2nd floor
942 Learning Way
(850) 644-8255
<https://counseling.fsu.edu/>

University Health Services
Health and Wellness Center
(850) 644-6230
<https://uhs.fsu.edu/>

Title IX Statement

As a recipient of Federal financial assistance for education activities, FSU is required by Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 to ensure that all of its education programs and activities are free from discrimination on the basis of sex. Sexual discrimination includes sexual misconduct (sexual violence, stalking, intimate partner violence, gender based animosity and gender based stereotyping). If you have questions about Title IX or wish to file a Title IX complaint, please visit the FSU Title IX website: www.titleix.fsu.edu or call the Title IX Director 850-644-6271. **Please note that as Responsible Employees, all faculty are required to report any incidents of sexual misconduct to the Title IX Office.** The Victim Advocate Program at FSU has a confidential advocate on call twenty-four hours a day to respond to FSU students, faculty, and staff who are victimized, or any other person who is victimized on our campus, or by an FSU student. Daytime Phone: 850.644.7161, 850.644.2277, or 850.645.0086. Nights, Weekends & Holidays 850.644.1234 ([FSUPD](#)) Ask to speak to the on-call advocate.

Sexual Harassment Policy

Sexual harassment is a form of discrimination based on a person's gender. Sexual harassment is contrary to the University's values and moral standards, which recognize the dignity and worth of each person, as well as a violation of federal and state laws and University rules and policies. Sexual harassment cannot and will not be tolerated by the Florida State University, whether by faculty, students, or staff; or by others while on property owned by or under the control of the University.

Syllabus Change Policy

Except for changes that substantially affect implementation of the evaluation (grading) statement, this syllabus is a guide for the course and is subject to change with advance notice.

Note: Changes will be noted online in Canvas, and a current version of the syllabus reflecting any changes will be available at all times through Canvas. Students are responsible for ensuring they are referencing the most current version of this syllabus. This course will observe all deadlines posted on the FSU Panama Academic Calendar, including add/drop dates.

Week	Date	Topic	Reading	Quiz Due	Assignment Due
1	M 8/1/2023	Introduction	Syllabus		
	W 10/1/2023	The Evolutionary Perspective	Article #1		Week 1 Discussion Questions
2	M 15/1/2023	The Evolution of Sex (I)	Article #2	Week 1 Quiz	
	W 17/1/2023	The Evolution of Sex (II)	Article #2	Hotseat	Week 2 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #2)
3	M 22/1/2023	Sexual Development	Article #3	Week 2 Quiz	
	W 24/1/2023	Disorders of Sexual Development	Article #3	Hotseat	Week 3 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #3)
4	M 29/1/2023	The Evolution of Mating Strategies (I)	Article #4	Week 3 Quiz	
	W 31/2/2023	The Evolution of Mating Strategies (II)	Article #4	Hotseat	Week 4 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #4)
5	M 5/2/2023	The Behavioral Endocrinology of Sex (I)	Article #5	Week 4 Quiz	
	W 7/2/2023	The Behavioral Endocrinology of Sex (II)	Article #5	Hotseat	Week 5 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #5)
6 Spring Break!	M 12/2/2023	No Class			
	W 14/2/2023	No Class			

7	M	19/2/2023	Psychophysiology of Sex (I)	Article #6		
	W	21/2/2023	Psychophysiology of Sex (II)	Article #6	Hotseat	Week 7 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #6)
8	M	26/2/2023	Sexual Behavior (I)	Article #7	Week 7 Quiz	
	W	28/2/2023	Sexual Behavior (II)	Article #7	Hotseat	Week 8 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #7)
9	M	4/3/2023	Attraction & Mate Preferences (I)	Article #8	Week 8 Quiz	
	W	6/3/2023	Attraction & Mate Preferences (II)	Article #8	Hotseat	Week 9 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #8)
10	M	11/3/2023	Sexual Orientation (I)	Article #9	Week 9 Quiz	
	W	13/3/2023	Sexual Orientation (II)	Article #9	Hotseat	Week 10 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #9)
11	M	18/3/2023	Sexual Relationships (I)	Article #10	Week 10 Quiz	
	W	20/3/2023	Sexual Relationships (II)	Article #10	Hotseat	Week 11 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #10)
12	M	25/3/2023	Love	Article #11	Week 11 Quiz	
	W	27/3/2023	Infidelity	Article #11	Hotseat	Week 12 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #11)

13	M	1/4/2023	Mate Retention	Article #12	Week 12 Quiz	
	W	3/4/2023	Sex & Gender	Article #12	Hotseat	Week 13 Discussion Questions Summary (Article #12)
14	M	8/4/2023	Polyamory	Article #13		Discussion Questions
	W	10/4/2023	Rape & Sexual Coercion	Article #14	Hotseat	Discussion Questions Summary (Article #14)
15	M	15/4/2023	Hormonal Contraception	Article #15	Hotseat	Discussion Questions Summary (Article #15)
	W	17/4/2023	Sexual Fantasies	Article #16	Hotseat	Discussion Questions Summary (Article #16)
16	M	22/4/2023	Atypical Sexuality	Article #17	Hotseat	Discussion Questions Summary (Article #17)
	W	24/4/2023	Sexual Disorders	Article #18	Hotseat	Discussion Questions Summary (Article #18)