

Sex, Ethics, and Pleasure Politics

Although sexual activity is a central part of socialization and identity formation, sexual behavior is generally considered a private matter, and is seldom examined critically in the public sphere. Universities are no exception; college students - regardless of whether they choose to have sex - are immersed in a campus culture in which 'private' sexual beliefs and behaviors shape the 'public' undergraduate social experience, and yet the uncritical attitudes that shape these beliefs and behaviors are rarely interrogated or considered within an ethical frame. How do differing moral, political, and sociological attitudes toward sexuality shape our ethics? How do these attitudes enrich or inhibit the possibility of sexual pleasure? How do attitudes about pleasure, the body, identity, and individuality define what sorts of sexual activity will be considered permissible or impermissible? Is pleasure something that we ought to pursue and promote? What is our ethical responsibility to the pleasure of others? How might a comprehensive sexual ethics cause us to rethink our understanding of justice and interpersonal responsibility?

This theme will build an ethical conversation centered on interpersonal sexual behavior as well as the political, scientific, religious, aesthetic, and legal forces that shape the permissibility and impermissibility of sexual acts. Our understanding of sexuality reflects how our society at any given period is organized, how it represents and 'naturalizes' sex, and how it comes to define the boundary of public and private space, the moral underpinnings of intimate and/or reproductive behavior, and the essential categories of sexual identity. Therefore, the ways in which we practice sex raise deep ethical questions about how we will regulate the economic reach of sexual industries, define normative sexual ethics, respond to sexual violence, and identify and pathologize sexual deviance. This programming theme will explore how culture, race, gender, class, technology, and language can simultaneously both constrain and create greater opportunities for sexual acts, interpersonal intimacy, and pleasure-seeking.

Through its special events and thematic lectures, the Center for Ethics emphasizes opportunities for continuing development of our powers for ethical reflection, moral leadership and responsible action. The Center's programs are designed to engage us in intensive and reflective thinking about our individual and collective values. Center programs are open to all members of the Muhlenberg campus and local community. Each year, the Center sponsors programming designed to encourage discussion and reflection on timely, pertinent topics.



The Center for Ethics is supported in part by the Christian A. Johnson Endeavor Foundation

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FALL 2013 PROGRAM



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Program Directors

<http://www.muhlenberg.edu/main/aboutus/cfe/>

FALL 2013 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

Campus Forum

“How Should We Talk About Sex at Muhlenberg?”

Tuesday September 10, 2013

7:30 p.m., Miller Forum, Moyer Hall

Panel moderated by Lanethea Matthews, (Associate Professor of Political Science), and featuring Mel Ferrara '15, Corey Goff (Director of Athletics), Randy Helm (President of the College), Robin Riley-Casey (Director of Multicultural Life), and Alan Tjeltveit (Professor of Psychology).



Joan E. Bertin

October 21-24, 2013

Day, Time, Place TBA

Since 1997, Joan E. Bertin has been Executive Director of the National Coalition Against Censorship, a group of more than 50 national non-profit organizations dedicated to promoting freedom of speech and expression. She addresses the history of the First Amendment, censorship, restrictions on sexually explicit speech, child pornography, political speech, government secrecy, broadcast decency, and censorship of science and sex education. *The Woodrow Wilson Visiting Fellow*



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Dorothy Roberts

Tuesday October 29, 2013

7:00 p.m., Seegers Union Event Space

Dorothy Roberts is George A. Weiss University Professor of Law and Sociology; Raymond Pace and Sadie Tanner Mossell Alexander Professor of Civil Rights at the University of Pennsylvania. She is the author of *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Recreate Race in the Twenty-first Century* and *Sex, Power, and Taboo: Gender and HIV in the Caribbean and Beyond*. She addresses health disparities among racial minorities, sexuality and law, and socioeconomic regulation of sexual health.



Anne Fausto-Sterling

Tuesday November 5, 2013

7:30 p.m., Miller Forum, Moyer Hall

Anne Fausto-Sterling is Nancy Duke Lewis Professor of Biology and Women's Studies at Brown University. She is the author of *Sex/Gender: Biology in a Social World* and *Sexing the Body: Gender Politics and the Construction of Sexuality*. Her work focuses on a comprehensive examination of the scientific efforts to study sexual behavior, an argument for the scientific construction of sexuality, and a critical reappraisal of dualisms that drive scientific investigation (sex/gender, nature/nurture, real/constructed).



E. Patrick Johnson

Tuesday November 12, 2013

7:30 p.m., Empie Theatre, Center for the Arts

Patrick Johnson is Carlos Montezuma Professor of Performance Studies and African-American Studies at Northwestern University. His publications and performances include *Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South* and *Black Queer Studies: A Critical Anthology*. His work includes a first-person ethnographic performance, documentary theatre, and race, gender, and sexuality in performance.

Co-sponsored by Theatre and Dance.



Preview of coming Spring Semester Events:

Monday January 27, 2014

Linda Williams, Professor of Film, at the University of California – Berkeley. Analysis of melodrama, horror, and pornography in film. *Co-sponsored by Film Studies.*

Tuesday February 11, 2014

Kate Ranieri, Assistant Professor of Media & Communication at Muhlenberg College. Film screening on conflicts surrounding abortion and community health.

February or March 2014

Marlene Zuk, Professor of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior, at University of Minnesota. *Paleofantasy: What Evolution Really Tells Us about Sex, Diet, and How We Live*

March or April 2014

Denise Brennan, Associate Professor of Anthropology, at Georgetown University. *What's Love Got to Do with It?: Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic.*