

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

The Center for Ethics is directed by
Bruce Wightman
Professor of Biology
2400 Chew Street
Allentown, PA, 18104
484-664-3254
wightman@muhlenberg.edu



SPRING 2014 PROGRAM



Jeremy Alden Teissere

Associate Professor of Biology and Neuroscience

Cathy Marie Ouellette

Assistant Professor of History

Program Directors

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

SPRING 2014 SCHEDULE OF EVENTS:

Linda Williams

"Sex is Too Important To Be Left to the Pornographers"
Monday January 27, 2014
7:30 p.m. Miller Forum Moyer Hall

Linda Williams is Professor of Film at the University of California, Berkeley. She is the author of *Screening Sex, a history of the representation and concealment of sex in the movies*. Her work focuses on the history and critical analysis of melodrama, horror, and pornography in film; psychoanalysis and Surrealist cinema.

Co-sponsored by Film Studies.



Panel Discussion

"Sex, Stigmatization & Violence"
Tuesday February 11, 2014
7:30 p.m. Seegers Event Space

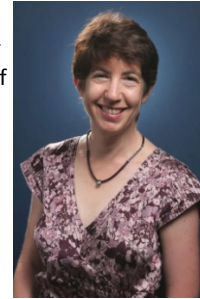
Three panelists will address the sociopolitical factors that contribute to the stigmatization of women's sexuality and reproductive rights: **Kate Ranieri**, Asst. Professor of Media and Communication at Muhlenberg College, and director of *Crossing the Line*, a documentary about the battles waged at a local abortion clinic, **Jennifer Boulanger**, Director of Communications at The Women's Centers, and **DuVergne Gaines**, Legal coordinator for the Feminist Majority Foundation & National Clinic Access Project.



Marlene Zuk

"Sex on Six Legs"
Tuesday March 18, 2014
7:30 p.m. Miller Forum Moyer Hall

Marlene Zuk is Professor of Ecology, Evolution and Behavior at the University of Minnesota. She is the author of *Paleofantasy: What Evolution Really Tells Us about Sex, Diet, and How We Live* and *Sex on Six Legs: Lessons on Life, Love, and Language from the Insect World*. Her work has been featured on the op-ed pages of the *New York Times*.



Denise Brennan

"Beyond Urban Myths and Sex Panics: Research with Survivors of Trafficking into Forced Labor"
Tuesday April 29, 2014
7:30 p.m. Miller Forum Moyer Hall

Denise Brennan is Associate Professor of Anthropology at Georgetown University. She is the author of *What's Love Got to Do with It?: Transnational Desires and Sex Tourism in the Dominican Republic*. Her work focuses on the sex industry in the Dominican Republic, the connection between large structural forces in the globalized economy and their effects on individuals in a sex-tourist destination.



RELATED EVENT:

Gerhard Rattai

"The Role of International Organizations Against Human Trafficking in Helping the Survivors of Human Trafficking"
Wednesday January 22, 2014
7:00 p.m. Seegers Great Room

Gerhard Rattai is the founder of Two-and-a-Half Miles, which rescues women and girls from sex-trafficking.
Sponsored by International Studies.

The FALL 2013 program featured:

Tuesday September 10, 2013
Campus Panel
How should we talk about sex at Muhlenberg?

Wednesday October 23, 2013
Joan E. Bertin
"Of Sex, Sin and Other Taboos: A Short Course in Censorship from Ancient Times to the Foreseeable Future"

Tuesday October 29, 2013
Dorothy Roberts
"Race, Gender, and Reproductive Technologies: The New Biopolitics"

Tuesday November 5, 2013
Anne Fausto-Sterling
"From Babies to Gender Identity: New ways to think about an Old Problem"

Tuesday November 12, 2013
E. Patrick Johnson
"Pouring Tea: Black Gay Men of the South Tell Their Tales"

Sunday November 24, 2013
Trip to the MUSEUM OF SEX in New York City