

Lisa R. George

"SEX IN THE ANCIENT WORLD ."

Course Syllabus

"That the same two sexes occur in every society is a matter of biology...that there is always sexuality is, however, a cultural matter....sexuality is that complex of reactions, interpretations, definitions, prohibitions, and norms that is created and maintained by a given culture in response to the fact of the two biological sexes."

Shelton
College

Jeffrey Henderson, "Greek Attitudes Towards Sex" in *Civilizations of the Ancient Mediterranean: Greece and Rome*.

OBJECTIVES:

The sexuality of a society serves as an avenue of approach to its social history. In this course about sex in ancient Greece and Rome, we will focus on many sexual issues that still trouble and energize our own society: women's rights, rape, prostitution, marriage, childbirth, homosexuality, and sexual awakening. Through the exploration of these topics from a feminist perspective, we will develop a picture of the ancient views on women, on "alternate" lifestyles, on laws regulating sex and sexual crime, and on human desire, which is itself timeless and ageless. The readings, culled from both primary sources and modern scholarship, will be supplemented throughout the semester by visual presentations of relevant art and architecture.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

Peter Bing and Rip Cohen, *Games of Venus*
Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*
Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*
Eva C. Keuls, *The Reign of the Phallus*
Sarah Pomeroy, *Goddesses, Whores, Wives, and Slaves* (abbr. GWWS)

RESERVE BOOKS:

N.J. Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*
Suzanne Dixon, *The Roman Family*
David M. Halperin, John J. Winkler, and Froma I. Zeitlin, eds., *Before Sexuality*
W.K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece*
Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece & Rome: A source book in translation*
Pauline Schmitt Pantel, ed., *A History of Women, Vol. I*
Amy Richlin, *The Garden of Priapus (2nd ed.)* and *Pornography and Representation in Greece & Rome*
Jo-Ann Shelton, *As the Romans Did: A Sourcebook in Roman Social History*
T.P. Wiseman, *Catullus and His World*

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

Midterm: 20%
Final: 30%
Paper (10 pgs.): 20%
Oral Presentation: 20%
Class Participation: 10%

The students will be responsible for all of the readings and for participating regularly in class discussion. In addition, each student will present a topic of his/her choice for the class, utilizing slides, CD-ROM images, and primary literary sources, and will write a final paper (which could be on the same topic) as a culmination of the course.

I. SEX BY THE BOOK: "Clinical" Views of Sex and Reproduction (2 weeks)

Short Selections from the following authors:

Plato, *Symposium*: Aristophanes's speech

Aristotle, *De Animalia*

Hippocrates

Soranos, *Gynecology*

Celsus

Galen

Pliny

Giulia Sissa, "The Sexual Philosophies of Plato and Aristotle," in *A History of Women, Vol. I*.

Ann Ellis Hanson, "The Medical Writers' Woman," in *Before Sexuality*.

Sarah Pomeroy, "Facts of Birth, Life and Death," (pp. 164-170) in *GWWS*.

Eva C. Keuls, "Learning to be a Man, Learning to be a Woman," in *Reign of the Phallus*.

Topics for Discussion:

What is the nature of human sexuality? of female and male sexuality?

Images of puberty and the beginning of sexual awareness: rituals, rites of passage.

Sexual pleasure? in women?

Ancient forms of contraception.

II. SEXUAL PREFERENCE: Female and Male Homosexuality (3 weeks)

GREECE:

Kenneth Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*, Chaps. 1-3.

Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, pp. 17-48, 78-93.

Eva Keuls, "The Boy Beautiful," in *Reign of the Phallus*.

Bing and Cohen, *The Games of Venus* (selections of erotic verse):

Sappho

Lyric Poets: Pindar, Archilochus, Solon et al.

ROME:

Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, pp. 97-101, 120-141, 155-172.

T.P. Wiseman, *Catullus and His World*, Ch. 1, "A World Not Ours."

Amy Richlin, "The Circumstances of Male Homosexuality in Roman Society of the Late Republic and Early Empire," in *Garden of Priapus*.

Short selections from:

Catullus

Martial, Juvenal

Petronius's *Satyricon*:

Topics for Discussion:

The Greek gymnasia, military, and symposia as male domains: Greek ideal of masculinity.

Laws about "deviant" sexual behavior: Greek and Roman.

Modern concepts of "preference" vs. ancient ideas about human desires and behaviors.

Roman concepts about sexual roles vs. sexual "labels."

III. PAYING FOR IT: Male and Female Prostitution (3 weeks)**GREECE:**

Selected portions of:

Pseudo-Demosthenes, *Against Neaira*.

Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*.

John J. Winkler, "Laying Down the Law: The Oversight of Men's Sexual Behavior in Classical Athens," in *Before Sexuality*.

Eva Keuls, "The Athenian Prostitute: A Good Buy in the Agora," and "The Whore with the Golden Heart, the Happy Hooker, and other Myths," in *Reign of the Phallus*.

Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, pp. 48-53.

Topics for Discussion:

Religious prostitution in Greece: the *hetaira* as a servant of Aphrodite.

The *hetaira* at the symposium.

ROME:

Selections from:

Plautus, Ovid, Catullus, Propertius

N.J. Adams, "Words for Prostitute in Latin," in *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*.

Eva Cantarella, *Bisexuality in the Ancient World*, pp. 101-104.

Topics for Discussion:

Roman attitudes towards prostitution.

The difference between a prostitute and a "concubine."

Slaves as prostitutes.

IV. MARRIED....WITH CHILDREN: Marital Relations, Childbirth; Adultery (3 weeks)**GREECE:**

Selections from:

Homer, *The Odyssey*

Hesiod, *Theogony*, and *Works and Days*

Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*

Claudine Leduc, "Marriage in Ancient Greece," in *A History of Women, Vol. I*.

W.K. Lacey, *The Family in Classical Greece*, pp. 100-118.

Sarah Pomeroy, "Physical Condition of Women," (pp. 84-86) in *GWWS*.

Eva Keuls, "Bearing Children, Watching the House," and "Easier to live with than a Wife" in *Reign of the Phallus*.

ROME:

Selections from:

Cicero's letters.

Selected Inscriptions: in Lefkowitz and Fant, *Women's Life in Greece & Rome* and in Shelton, *As the Romans Did*.

Suzanne Dixon, "Marriage," and "Children," in *The Roman Family*.

Topics for Discussion:

Social attitudes on adultery: mores, punishments, acceptance.
Greek and Roman laws on marital sex and adultery.

V. SEXUAL CRIME: Rape (2 weeks)

Diodorus Siculus

Livy, Book 1: the Lucretia Story, the Sabine Women.

Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, selections.

Amy Richlin, "Reading Ovid's Rapes," in *Pornography and Representation in Greece & Rome*.

Eva Keuls, "Attic Mythology: Barren Goddesses, Male Wombs, and the Cult of Rape," in *Reign of the Phallus*.

Topics for Discussion:

Rape in Greek and Roman Mythology, Drama, Literature: what did it mean to the ancients? Zeus/Jupiter as serial rapist.

Why was Ovid in particular rape-obsessed?

Rape as an element in the founding of cities and colonization: e.g. Herakles, the Sabine Women.

The Story of Lucretia: why has it endured?

VI. STUDENT PRESENTATIONS: (1 1/2 weeks)