Professor Alessandra Rellini (office: 332 John Dewey Hall)
E-mail: arellini@uvm.edu
Office Hours: Tues & Thurs 9:45-10:30; and by appointment

Course Objectives
This course will focus on current research on sexual dysfunction. In particular, we will study hypoactive sexual desire, sexual arousal dysfunction, orgasmic dysfunction and sexual satisfaction. The course will review physiological, psychological, cultural, and relational factors that affect these dysfunctions. Students will learn cutting edge research methodologies and will learn to critically analyze the literature on these research topics. The course will require students to be effective at oral and written presentation and large part of the course grade will be based on two comprehensive, written reviews of the literature on subjects related to the topics covered in class.

By the end of the course you should be able to:
• Describe, compare, and evaluate several major theoretical models of sexual dysfunction/function;
• Describe significant psychological, biological, relational, and social factors that affect sexual dysfunction;
• Distinguish between well-established research findings, unfounded beliefs, and currently unresolved issues in sexual function;
• Have developed an in depth knowledge on two specific topics you choose within the area of sexual dysfunction/function;
• Identify different types of methodologies to study sexual dysfunction/function;
• Communicate effectively, orally and in writing, about issues pertaining to sexual function/dysfunction.

Readings
REQUIRED: No textbook is required for the class. Scientific articles that are required readings are posted on Bb. Students should do the readings prior to coming to class and need to be prepared to discuss the article. Students will need to remember the authors and the year when the article was published, the main research question and the theoretical/empirical support for the research questions the authors provide in the background, the main points of the methodology (if the article describes an empirical study),
the results and the main points of the discussion. Students are allowed to write a summary of
the article and use their notes for class discussion. The day the readings are due is indicated
in the schedule below. The readings are due on the day they are listed.

**OPTIONAL:**
Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association (Paperback) by American
Psychological Association (Author). Make sure you buy the 5th edition!
http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/ASIN/1557987912/ref=nosim/coffeeresearch73182-20
cost on Amazon.com: $8.89 used and $12.54 new
We will not read this book but you will need to know how to write a paper following the APA
guidelines. Either got to the library to consult this book or purchase your own. If you plan to
go to graduate school in psychology this will become your bible so go ahead and buy it now if
you plan to continue in the field.

**Schedule of lectures, readings, writing assignments and other important dates.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day</th>
<th>Lecture topic</th>
<th>Assignment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan 13</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 10</td>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>- no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 12</td>
<td>Conference</td>
<td>- no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Feb 26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Sex in the brain - Nathorst-Boos, &amp; Hammar (1997).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 3</td>
<td>TOWN MEETING</td>
<td>- no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Notes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>sexual arousal</td>
<td>- Rellini, McCall, Randall, &amp; Meston (2005).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Suschinsky, Lalamier, &amp; Chivers (on-line first).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 10</td>
<td>SPRING RECESS</td>
<td>- no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 12</td>
<td>SPRING RECESS</td>
<td>- no class</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mar 17</td>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Love and passion</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Hatfield</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Fisher</td>
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<td>Mar 19</td>
<td>Quality of life</td>
<td>Quality of life</td>
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<td>Mar 24</td>
<td>Emotions</td>
<td>Lecture on emotions</td>
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<td><strong>FIRST PAPER DUE by 8:30 am</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 7</td>
<td>Relationship factors</td>
<td>Relationship satisfaction</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Turdel (2002).</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Christophere, &amp; Sprecher (2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr 9</td>
<td>Relationship satisfaction</td>
<td>- Sprecher, (2002).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 17</td>
<td>Class oral presentations</td>
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<td>Apr 21</td>
<td>Class oral presentations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 23</td>
<td>Class oral presentations</td>
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<td>Apr 28</td>
<td>Class moved to April 30</td>
<td><strong>SECOND PAPER DUE by 5pm</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apr 30</td>
<td>Sex Treasure Hunt at: “Good Stuff” – Church St.</td>
<td><strong>EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY 2</strong></td>
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</table>
Course Requirements for Psy 295/WST 295: Human Sexuality

Students will receive a course grade for the semester based upon the quality of their completion of the following requirements, each of which is described further below:

A. Class attendance & contributions (5% of final grade)
B. Two oral examinations on the readings (10% each = 20% of final grade)
C. Writing Assignments
   OPTION A: Two research papers (30% each = 60% of final grade)
   OR
   OPTION B: 1 research paper (60% of final grade).
D. Power Point Presentation (15% of final grade)
E. Extra credit: (1% each opportunity = 2% of final score)
   Opportunity 1: “Vagina Monologues”
   OR/AND
   Opportunity 2: “Sex Treasure Hunt at Good Stuff Sex Store”.

Student and instructor/course evaluations. Both in the middle and at the end of the semester, I will ask you to provide me with written feedback on your own course-related progress and performance. I will also ask you to evaluate the strengths of the course and my teaching, and ways they can be improved (we'll use the mid-semester feedback to try to make mid-semester improvements).

A. CLASS ATTENDANCE and CONTRIBUTIONS:

This class is a combination lecture & seminar course. Your active and thoughtful participation is critical to shaping the quality of your own and others' learning experiences. Therefore, every student is expected to:

• Attend every class (if you must miss a class, be sure to inform me beforehand),
• Come to each class having completed and thought about all the assignments for that day,
• Contribute to the class discussion in a careful, thoughtful, and active manner. I recognize that some students find it more difficult than others to speak up in class. The students who speak the most do not necessarily contribute the most!

Pursue the following goals:

1. Think carefully and actively about the issues we are addressing (and raise relevant issues that we should address but inadvertently ignore).
2. Listen attentively, actively, and openly to the commentary of others in the class.
3. Share your ideas, reactions, and analyses with others in the class on a regular basis.
4. Create a constructive dialogue in class by responding to, building on, and helping to develop the ideas of others as well as your own. This means that, when relevant, you:
   (a) ASK for clarification and elaboration by others (e.g., "Can you say more about that?" "Would you give some examples of what you mean?" "I don't think I fully understand; do you mean to say ...?" "How does your perspective relate to Student X's comment [or article X that we read]?"


(b) ASK good questions of one another that will foster constructive and collaborative thinking and problem solving (e.g., "Why do you think that there's so much [or so little] consensus among us on this?" "Could we combine our perspectives, based on our different experience, to try to make sense of this question?")

Evaluation of your class attendance and contributions will comprise 5% of your final course grade

**ADDENDUM TO ATTENDANCE AS DISCUSSED IN CLASS:** students can miss class for health-related reasons for 3 times before their grade will be affected. Students need to email me as soon as possible to let me know they will be missing the course. If students have pre-established academic, athletic or religious engagements they should let me know as soon as possible about the dates they will be missing and provide documentations when indicated. These absences do not count towards the 3 health-related absences.

**B. TWO ORAL EXAMINATIONS ON THE READINGS:** Randomly, throughout the semester you will be asked to provide a brief summary about one or more of the readings that were assigned for that day. While I encourage students to write a summary that they can use for class discussions, they cannot use these summaries during the oral examination. Information you will be asked to provide includes:

- Name of the authors and the year when the article was published,
- the main research question and the theoretical/empirical support for the research questions,
- the main points of the methodology (if the article describes an empirical study),
- the results
- the main points of the discussion

The maximum score for each oral examination is 10 points. A complete and well presented summary will earn 10 points. Summaries that are confusing but include all the information will receive 9 points. Summaries that are both confusing and miss information will earn between 5 and 7 points. Students who are not prepared because they did not do the readings for that day can use one "excuse" and they will be randomly called another time. If a student is not prepared they will receive a score of ZERO for that day and they will be called one more time to make-up. A clear and comprehensive summary presented during a make-up call can earn a maximum of 6 points and can be substituted to an earlier lower score.

Example of a complete summary (to be provided orally) for the article:


**Authors:** Rellini and Meston wrote in 2006 an article on the sexual responses of women with a history of child sexual abuse (CSA).

**Research question:** Their main research question concerned the role of the sympathetic nervous system (SNS) on the physiological sexual arousal of women with a history of CSA. They hypothesized that women with a history of CSA who experience posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) would show lower physiological sexual arousal when measured with a device called vaginal photoplethysmography.

**Background:** The support for this hypothesis comes from the literature on the role of the SNS on female sexual arousal and the empirical evidence that shows impairments in the SNS of women with PTSD. Rellini and colleague explain that CSA survivors have more problems with sexual arousal than women with no history of CSA. They also explain that prior studies found that moderate activation of the SNS facilitates sexual arousal, but excessive activation of the SNS reduces sexual arousal in women. They also present studies showing that women with PTSD have heightened SNS activity.

**Method:** they asked women recruited from the community to come to the laboratory for 2 visits. During one visit women watched a film comprising a non-sexual and a sexual video. During the second visit women first run on a treadmill for 20 min (this was done to increase SNS activity) and then watched a second film (non-sexual/sexual video). Participants also completed questionnaires on sexual function and an interview on PTSD symptoms.

**Results:** 1) the CSA group had more sexual arousal function problems (measured with a questionnaire) 2) CSA group had overall lower physiological sexual arousal (VPA)
3) the non-CSA group showed more sexual arousal after exercise but for the CSA group exercise did not increase sexual arousal.
4) there were no differences between CSA group with PTSD and CSA group without PTSD.
5) they also did secondary analyses on cortisol.
Discussion: the authors use the results to point out that the CSA group showed a different sexual response than the NSA group although PTSD symptoms did not seem to explain the difference. The authors speculate on the use of therapies to downregulate SNS to help women with a history of CSA that have sexual problems.

C. RESEARCH PAPERS. You can choose between OPTION A and OPTION B.
Option A: TWO Research Papers – Background ONLY.
Each research paper should be 6 to 7 pages (including references and title page). The deadlines are specified on the syllabus (see above). Each of the research papers need to include between 10 and 15 references which MUST be primary sources (articles published in scientific journals). If you want to use books or chapters you can but these will not count towards your total number of references. You will be writing what is normally considered the background section of an empirical paper. Your paper will need to have a clear research questions and in the final paragraph you will need to identify clear hypotheses based on the literature you reviewed but you will not need to explain how you would test your ideas (no methods). Each paper will count for 30% of your final grade for a total of 60%. For an example of an excellent research paper please look on Bb but stop BEFORE methods since this section is not required for people selecting OPTION A.

The papers will be evaluated on the following areas:
Correct use of APA style: 5%
Utilization of comprehensive list of primary resources: 20%
Correct utilization of grammar: 25%
Clarity in the logical connection between and within paragraphs: 25%
Ability to provide a critical review of the articles: 25%

OPTION B: ONE Research Paper. BACKGROUND and METHODS.
If you choose OPTION B you will turn in the paper on April 28th. You paper needs to be 10 to 12 pages and you will need to use 30 to 40 primary references. In addition to the background (follow instructions for OPTION A) you will also need to explain the method you will use to test your ideas. You will need to find the questionnaires you intend to use, explain and describe in details any specific equipment you will use, describe the inclusion and exclusion criteria for your sample, and describe in details the procedure.

The paper will be evaluated on the following areas:
Correct use of APA style: 5%
Utilization of comprehensive list of primary resources: 10%
Correct utilization of grammar: 25%
Clarity in the logical connection between and within paragraphs: 20%
Clarity and creativity of the research method: 25%
Ability to provide a critical review of the articles: 15%

REVISIONS: You are free and welcome to turn in your paper(s) earlier than the established deadline and I will be glad to give you feedback. I will return your paper 1 week after I receive it. Only the version that you turn in on the deadline will receive a grade.

I am unable to accept late papers!
D. POWER POINT PRESENTATION. Scientists communicate their findings with colleagues through written and/or oral communications. This assignment is intended to help you practice your oral presentation skills. You will be asked to use power point to provide a 6-min presentation on one of your papers. An example of a power point is posted on Bb to give you an idea of what I expect.

Your presentation will be graded based on the following:

1. Clarity and visual appeal of the slides: 40%
2. Ability of presented to convey logical and clear message: 40%
3. Respect of time limits (points will be deducted to people taking longer than 6 min): 20%

E. EXTRA CREDIT. There are 2 opportunities for students to receive extra credits:

OPPORTUNITY 1: Attend and provide a thought paper on “The Vagina Monologue”.
For a total of 2 extra credit points.
After attending to the event provide a brief description and review of the event. Try to relate what you saw with the information we have been reviewing in class. Explain specific research questions that were inspired by the show. If you are one of the students who will attend the ISSWSH conference, you may choose to write a thought paper on one of the key notes at the conference. Thought papers should be 2 to 3 pages and need to integrate the information provided by the show (or the lecture) with information discussed in class or from scientific articles you researched. The article needs to be written according to APA style and needs to be grammatically correct.

A will correspond to 1% of your final grade
B will correspond to 0.75% of your final grade
C will correspond to 0.5% of your final grade
D will correspond to 0% of your final grade.
This paper needs to be returned by Feb 24th

OPPORTUNITY 2: Sex Treasure Hunt. For a total of 2% of your total grade.
On April 30th we will have a Sex Treasure Hunt at Good Stuff, a sex store on Church St, Burlington. You will receive a list made of 10 items and will have to use the goods in the store to answer the questions. Each correct item will count for a 0.1% of your final score. A perfect score (all 10 items correct) will increase your final grade of %2 of your final grade. Items are based on the readings and discussions conducted in class. You will need to recall the readings and the authors of the manuscripts discussed in class. No notes or books are allowed during the Treasure Hunt.

Since I offer extra credit I will NOT ROUND UP the final score. The ONLY way to round up your final grade is by completing the EXTRA CREDIT. NO EXCEPTIONS!

Grade Chart:
Your final letter grade will be based on the following percentages:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>At least Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>A-</td>
<td>90%</td>
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<tr>
<td>B+</td>
<td>87%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C+</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D+</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>63%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
D-  At least 60%
F  Less than 60%

NOTE:
Your final score will not be rounded at the end of the semester. For example, if your final score is 86.9999999999 (B) your score will NOT be rounded up to 87.0 (B+) just because you are closer to a B+ than a B-. The only way to bump up your score from 86.9999999999 to 87.0 is to earn the extra needed points by completing the extra credit.

REFERENCES

11. Hatfield (TBD).


42. Wiegol, Sipsky, & Barlow (TBD).