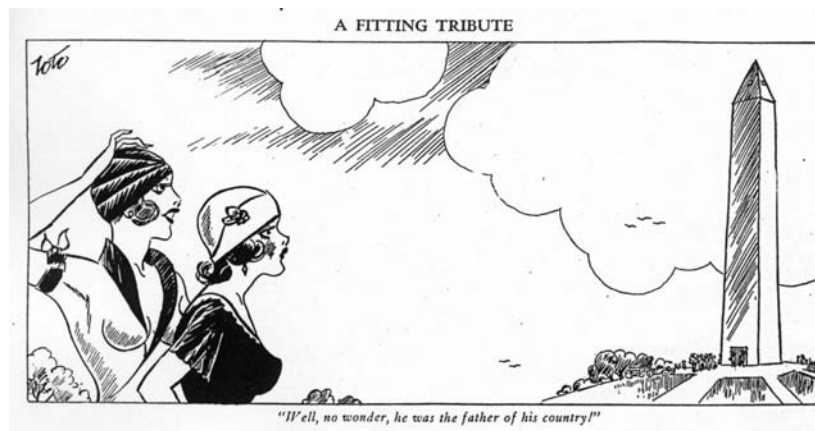


*****Offered for the first time since Spring 2007*****

SEXUALITY IN U.S. HISTORY

American Studies/History/Women's Studies 130

Professor Chad Heap



Whether they think we're overly prudish or overindulgent, much of the rest of the world believes Americans are obsessed with sex. On the one hand, they blame our Puritan forebears for a supposed current of sexual repression that is said to have shaped Americans' responses to sexual matters—from colonial-era regulation of carnal sin to present-day debates on abortion and same-sex marriage. On the other, they lambaste American capitalism for its apparent exploitation of sex and the resulting proliferation of sexually explicit language, imagery, and activity in American popular culture, politics, and daily life. But were the Puritans and their descendants really as sexually repressed as some critics would have us believe? And has the commercialization of American sexuality necessarily been as detrimental as others might suggest?

In an attempt to answer these questions and others, we will look back over more than 400 years of American history to chart the changing social organization and cultural meaning of sexual practices and desires. Among other topics, we will examine the establishment of sexual norms in colonial America; the relationship between sex and slavery; the relatively recent emergence of heterosexuality and homosexuality as predominant categories of sexual experience and identity; and the development of women's liberation and lesbian, gay, queer and transgender politics. While we're unlikely to arrive at any definitive notion of sexuality's role in shaping either American culture or others' perceptions of us, by the end of the semester we will learn to appreciate the historical complexity of sexuality and to critically analyze its place in American life.

SEXUALITY IN U.S. HISTORY will meet for lecture on Tuesdays & Thursdays, 11:10 a.m.-12:00 p.m., & for a one-hour discussion section on Wednesdays.

This course will fulfill the following requirements:

Humanities GCR

American Studies majors: Power, Identity, and Difference concentration (AMST 130)

History majors: United States history distribution requirement (HIST 130)

Political Science majors: History distribution requirement (HIST 130)

Psychology majors: American Studies *or* History distribution requirement (AMST/HIST 130)

Women's Studies majors: Humanities distribution requirement (WSTU 130)