

Global Perspectives on Sex Work GEND 3000 (3 credits)

The Netherlands: Human Trafficking, Sex Trade, and Modern Slavery in Europe

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

This course casts a critical eye on the myriad varieties of sex work and the relationship between sex workers and their broader society in the global world. Although traditional, hetero “prostitution” – the exchange for penetrative intercourse for goods and/or services – comes first to mind, that is only the tip of the sex work iceberg. Transactional sex, peep shows, camming, trans and queer phone banks, pornography, even the sale of sex toys, can be considered under the rubric of sex work. This course explores these topics, among others.

The best study of sex work integrates the examination of the types of sex work with the ethos that supports it. For this reason, we will examine the deeply-held theoretical and philosophical ideas about religion, gender, and sex that provide a structure for the way we approach sex work, and the current global political and economic systems that make sex work so profitable and popular.

While we consider a variety of perspectives, it is our fundamental belief that sex workers are complex, multifaceted actors with agency deserving of respect. While we can disagree on many issues, we will not infantilize, denigrate, nor in any way question the fundamental humanity of the people who take part in sex work.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of the course, students will be able to:

- Illustrate varieties of legalization models and types of sex work, as demonstrated by an in-class presentation;
- Analyze and respond to sophisticated scholarship on sex work, as demonstrated by an ongoing class portfolio with short reading responses and in-class assignments;
- Apply queer, feminist, and migration theory as demonstrated in a term paper.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English, but students will be exposed to vocabulary related to course content as well as the nuances of economic change and development through in-country expert lectures and field visits in a wide range of venues and regional locales.

Instructional Methods

We marry traditional in-class and experiential learning styles to educate the whole person in an immersive and intellectually enlightening process. We study theory because it is an analytical tool to help us understand our world, our ideas, the ideas of others, and absolutely uncharted situations. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning involves both content and process. Learning is holistic and happens through various life experiences upon which students draw to generate new ways of knowing and being.

Required Texts

All course materials, save the pre-departure reading, will be available on Canvas.

Assignments and Evaluation

Assignment Descriptions and Grading Criteria

1) Legalization Model Presentation (25%)

Each student will prepare and present, as part of a team, a lesson on a model of legal treatment of prostitution (Nordic Model, Dutch Model, Prohibition) as part of a team once during the term. This presentation will be both factually informative and involve the students' own ideas about legalization models. Further details for this assignment will be covered in class.

2) Portfolio (25%)

Students will maintain a portfolio to trace their academic development throughout the course. The portfolio includes small out-of-class assignments, daily reading responses, short in-class writing assignments, and personal reflections. The point here is to make sure students have a repository for their ideas and get academic credit for the real work they do outside of class that is not measured elsewhere.

3) Opinion Piece (10%)

Students will prepare an opinion-style piece outlining a clear path of action to ameliorate the position of sex workers.

4) Amsterdam Paper (30%)

The city of Amsterdam is an excellent location for the study of a number of the issues we will discuss in the course of the term. Students will write an 8-10 page argumentative essay exploring a course theme in the Dutch context. Paper topics will be developed in concert with the academic director.

5) Participation (10%)

This includes active involvement in lectures, readings, discussions and Site-visits using the following criteria:

- Attendance - promptness to class and positive presence in class.

- Active Listening - paying attention in class and during field Site-visits, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm (this includes body language), entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes.
- Involvement in Class Discussions - either in small or large groups, sharing knowledge. This means challenging yourself to speak up if you usually don't, and also means allowing others to speak if you are a person who tends to dominate class discussions.
- Group Accountability – positive participation in the group during field Site-visits and classes; not keeping others waiting.
- Displaying Respect – culturally appropriate interaction with hosts, SIT program staff, SIT lecturers and communities.

Assessment

Legalization Model Presentation - 25%
 Portfolio - 25%
 Opinion Piece – 10%
 Amsterdam Paper - 30%
 Participation - 10%

Attendance and Participation

Due to the nature of SIT Study Abroad programs, and the importance of student and instructor contributions in each and every class session, attendance at all classes and for all program Site-visits is required. **Attendance is necessary but not sufficient.** Students must fully participate in all program components and courses. Students may not voluntarily opt out of required program activities. Valid reasons for absence – such as illness – must be discussed with the academic director or other designated staff person. Absences impact academic performance, may impact grades, and could result in dismissal from the program.

Late Assignments

SIT Study Abroad programs integrate traditional classroom lectures and discussion with field-based experiences, site visits and debriefs. The curriculum is designed to build on itself and progress to the culmination. It is critical that students complete assignments in a timely manner to continue to benefit from the sequences in assignments, reflections and experiences throughout the program. Late assignments lose 4% per 24-hour period, starting one minute after the assignment is due.

Grading Scale

94-100%	A
90-93%	A-
87-89%	B+
84-86%	B
80-83%	B-
77-79%	C+
74-76%	C
70-73%	C-
67-69%	D+

64-66% D
below 64 F

Program Expectations

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings and your portfolio entry completed, and have some points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, submitted online or printed out as required, and done accordingly to the specified requirements.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak.
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.
- Storing Your Work: Keep several copies of your work as back up and keep one copy accessible to you through an online forum, such as an attachment in your email, the course learning management system, or cloud-based storage. This way your work will always be available to despite technical issues. Lost files, deleted drives, or computer crashes are not excuses for late, missing work.
- Personal Technology Use: Cell phones and other personal electronics must be stowed during class.
- Course Communication: The syllabus and assignment sheets contain all the information students need to succeed in class. In the very likely case that there are minor changes – in venue or time, for example – this information will be dispatched via email. Students are responsible for keeping themselves informed.
- Content Considerations: Some texts and activities you will encounter in this course delve into sensitive topics that may be emotionally and intellectually challenging. Our classroom is a space where we can engage with challenging ideas, question assumptions, and navigate difficult topics with respect and maturity. As possible, I will flag content and activities that are especially graphic or intense, so we are prepared to address them soberly and sensitively. If you are struggling to keep up with the work or participate in the course because of the nature of the content and activities, you should speak with me and/or seek help from counseling services.
- Classroom recording policy: To ensure the free and open discussion of ideas, students may not record classroom lectures, discussion and/or activities without the advance written permission of the instructor, and any such recording properly approved in advance can be used solely for the student's own private use.

SIT Policies and Resources

Please refer to the [SIT Study Abroad Handbook](#) and the [Policies](#) section of the SIT website for all academic and student affairs policies. Students are accountable for complying with all published policies. Of particular relevance to this course are the policies regarding: academic

integrity, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), research and ethics in field study and internships, late assignments, academic status, academic appeals, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and misconduct, and the student code of conduct.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad Handbook and SIT website for information on important resources and services provided through our central administration in Vermont, such as [Library resources and research support](#), [Disability Services](#), [Counseling Services](#), [Title IX information](#), and [Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion](#) resources.

Course Schedule

Please be aware that topics and Site-visits may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

Module 1: Development of the Sex Industry

In this module, students examine the origins and development of sex work. From the very problematic label of "the world's oldest profession," there is a conception that sex work a) is only prostitution, and b) has existed as static and monolithic throughout history. We will work to nuance these positions by considering some basic social, often gendered and racialized, conceptions about sex and the body and the way Europeans transported these ideas around the globe through colonialism, trade, and, eventually, tourism.

Site-visits and Speakers:

- Venus Temple, Amsterdam
- Sex Tour of Amsterdam
- Rijksmuseum

Class Sessions:

- "Original Sin" and why sex is bad
- The Problem of Unmarried Women
- "Common Women" and the pre-modern version of unmarried women
- The myth of the courtesan and magical sex
- Port towns and syphilis
- Sacajawea, la Malinche, and indigenous concubines
- Comparative masculinities, Sherry Ortner, and "conquering"
- Is marriage sex work?
- Transactional sex
- Sex tourism, part one

Readings:

Genesis, ch 1-3.

Bishop, R. and Robinson, L. (1999). In the Night Market: Tourism, Sex, and Commerce in Contemporary Thailand. *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 27. 32-46.

Karras, R. (1998). *Common Women*. Oxford University Press, 3-13.

Kempadoo, K. (2001). Freelancers, Temporary Wives, and Beach Boys: Research Sex Work in the Caribbean. *Feminist Review*, 67. 39-62.

- Lyons, S. (2017). Praise Lilith, a Chill Demon Cast from Eden for Refusing Missionary Position. *Vice*.
- Healy, D. (2001). Masculine Purity and 'Gentlemen's Mischief': Sexual Exchange and Prostitution between Russian Men, 1861 – 41. *Slavic Review* 60, 233-65.
- Levine, P. (2003). Colonial Medicine and the Project of Modernity. *Prostitution, Race and Politics: Policing Venereal Disease in the British Empire*. Psychology Press, 61-91.
- Rubin, G. (2012). Thinking Sex. *Deviations: A Gayle Rubin Reader*. Duke University Press, 137 – 82.
- Sreenivas, M. (2011). Creating Conjugal Subjects: Devadasis and the Politics of Marriage in Colonial Madras Presidency. *Feminist Studies* 37, 63 – 92.

Module 2: Agency or Exploitation: Theoretical Perspectives on Sex Workers

The most long-standing, virulent, and salient debate about sex work is the degree to which sex workers (especially those identifying as queer, women, and people of color) are active agents as opposed to victims. This module will explore this question to its depths, focusing particularly on rarely heard voices. This is the place where we shall consider the argument that legalization makes sex work safer.

Site-visits and Speakers:

- The Red Light District
- PROUD and PIC
- Velvet and Lily
- Laced-up Boutique Utrecht
- Exxpose

Class Sessions:

- Strange bedfellows: the 80s porn debate
- Wage labor
- Street hustling
- "Radical" feminism
- What is agency?
- What is empowerment?
- COYOTE
- Intersectional sex workers rights
- Subjectivity of sex workers
- Violence and danger
- Legalization presentations

Readings:

- George, A., Vindhya, U., and Ray, S. (2010). Sex Trafficking and Sex Work: Definitions, Debates, and Dynamics. *Economic and Political Weekly*, 45.17, 64 -73.
- Jeffreys. S. (2012). Beyond 'Agency' and 'Choice' in Theorizing Prostitution. *Prostitution, Harm and Gender Inequality Theory, Research, and Policy*. Ashgate Press, 69 – 86.
- Marcus, A. (2014). Conflict and Agency among Sex Workers and Pimps: A Closer Look

- at Domestic Minor Sex Trafficking. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 653.1, 225- 46.
- Van Bavel, H. (2017). Beyond Exploitation: Towards a Nuanced Understanding of Agency for Adolescent Female Sex Workers – Evidence from Zanzibar and Morogoro. *Culture, Health & Sexuality*, 19.1, 76 – 90.
- Wardlow, H. (2004). Anger, Economy, and Female Agency: Problematizing “Prostitution” and “Sex Work” among the Huli of Papua New Guinea. *Signs*, 29.4, 1017-40.

Module 3: Minority Sex Workers

In this module we examine sex work, and sexuality writ large, as seen through the eyes of minority practitioners. Our fundamental questions here regard bodily autonomy, and conceptions about raced and sexed bodies.

Site-visits and Speakers:

- Barndesteeg and Bloedstraat
- Heppie Seks
- Club Church

Class Sessions:

- Modern abuses of the Hottentot Venus
- Queer sex work
- Trans sex workers
- Drag?
- Disability and sex work
- Unequal prosecution of sex work

Readings:

- Anarfi, J. (1998). Ghanaian Women and Prostitution in Cote d’Ivoire. *Global Sex Workers: Rights, Resistance, and Redefinition*. Psychology Press,
- Ballard, F.J. (2014) Transcendental Gazes: Pornographic Images of Transmasculinity. *Sensational Pleasures in Cinema, Literature, and Culture: The Phallic Eye*. Palgrave, 91 – 103.
- Doezema, J. (2001). Ouch! Western Feminists’ Wounded Attachment to the Third World Prostitute. *Feminist Review*, 67, 16-38
- Laing, M. et alia, eds. (2016). *Queer Sex Work*. Routledge Press, several chapters.
- Miller-Young, M. (2010). Putting Hypersexuality to Work: Black Women and Illicit Eroticism in Pornography. *Sexualities* 13, 219-35.
- Sassen, S. (2000). Women’s Burden: Counter-Geographies of Globalization and the Feminization of Survival. *Journal of International Affairs*, 53, 503 – 24.

Module 4: The Modern Sex Industry and Sex Worker’s Rights

The modern sex industry has developed in concert with technological advances; once again: this is uncharted territory. There are new forms of sex work – camming, for instance – that are dependent on the very communication technology that makes maintaining privacy virtually

impossible. Sex workers are able to use the internet to meet new clients and exercise greater control of their working conditions, too, but there are drawbacks. And as modern conceptions about sexuality and gender change, so, too, do ideas about sex work. This module explores the intersection of these issues, taking special care to hear the voices of the people involved in sex work.

Site-visits and Speakers:

- Abby Winters
- Blue Artichoke Films
- Casa Rosso Erotic Theater
- Mistress Pia
- Mail & Female

Class Sessions:

- COYOTE and De Rode Draad
- Pornography
- Women-led pornography
- Sex shops
- Live sex shows
- BDSM for sale
- Camming

Readings:

- Jones, A. (2019). Introduction and Conclusion. *Camming: Money, Power, and Pleasure in the Sex Work Industry*. New York University Press, 1-18; 229 – 50.
- Mac, J. and Smith, M. (2018). *Revolting Prostitutes: The Fight for Sex Workers' Rights*. Verso Books, selections.
- Mgbako, C. (2020). The Mainstreaming of Sex Workers' Rights as Human Rights. *Harvard Women's Literary Journal*, 92-146.
- Padva, G. (2019). Pornography as Culture Industry: Adult Entertainment in the Age of Obscene Reproduction. *Handbuch Kritische Theorie*, 1301- 15.
- St. James, M. (1973). *Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics: a loose womans' organization*. COYOTE.
- Weitzer, R. (2020). The Campaign Against Sex Work in the United States: A Successful Moral Crusade. *Sexuality Research and Social Policy* 17, 399-414.