

**Subject Title:** Sexual Politics

**Instructor:** Dr Lauren Rosewarne  
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**Course Overview:**

This subject introduces ideas developed in feminist theory about the social and political construction of areas of experience relating to the body, gender and sexuality. Issues analysed in the subject include transsexualism, reproduction, pornography, sex work, sexual violence and sexual orientation. Students who complete this subject should be able to understand the ways in which issues connected with the body and sexuality are socially and politically constructed, understand the ways in which the construction of masculinity and femininity affects the learning and regulation of such areas of experience, and apply a variety of feminist approaches to the analysis of these issues.

**Course Delivery:**

This is an online-only course. Lecture delivery is asynchronous: students will have access to all lectures prior to the beginning of the course. There will also be a small number of live Zoom meetings.

**Instructor Bio:**

Dr Lauren Rosewarne is currently a Visiting Professor at Wesleyan and otherwise is employed as a Senior Lecturer in the School of Social and Political Sciences at the University of Melbourne, Australia. In 2015, she was a Visiting Professor at the University of Connecticut, USA and in 2011 was a Visiting Professor at the University of Massachusetts. Lauren currently teaches in the areas of political science and gender studies and writes, comments and speaks on a wide variety of topics including gender, sexuality, public policy, politics, social media, pop culture and technology. Lauren has authored eleven books, as well as journal articles, book chapters and hundreds of opinion pieces and popular culture columns. She has also been widely cited in academic literature, and is a regular contributor to a range of radio and television programs. Previously she has co-hosted ABC Radio National's Stop Everything! pop culture program and Mamamia's Sealed Section podcast. For more information, visit her website: [www.laurenrosewarne.com](http://www.laurenrosewarne.com).

**Written Assessment:**

1 Research Essay (4000 words) or 2 Research Essays (2 x 2000 words)

**Module Breakdown:**

**Module 1: Introduction to Sexuality and Gender**

This module examines how the course is organised and introduces the concepts of sex, gender and sexual politics.

**Module 2: Sexology and the Sexual Revolution**

The 'science' of sexology over the last century has been important in constructing common sense notions of sex and sexuality. In this module we will look at the origins of sexology and its construction of male and female heterosexuality around dominance and submission and the categorisation of homosexuality. We will see how the ideas of sexology helped to construct what has been seen as the 'sexual revolution' of the sixties and seventies, a revolution from which a new wave of feminism and gay liberation emerged.

### **Module 3: Feminist Theory and Sexuality**

This module we look at the varieties of feminist theory and the different ways in which they have tended to approach sexuality. We will look at the distinctions between liberal, radical, socialist and postmodern feminist thought on these issues.

### **Module 4: Women's Bodies in Politics: Fashion and Beauty**

This module we will look here at the construction of beauty for women including several aspects of the politics of appearance such as cosmetic surgery and the construction of ageing as a disease. We will also look at various ways of interpreting body modification practices including cutting, piercing and tattooing.

### **Module 5: Women's Bodies in Politics: The Politics of Reproductive Technologies**

This module we will examine the implications of the medicalisation of women's reproductive bodies through vaccinations against pregnancy and HPV, hormone for menopause and reproductive technologies for women, such as surrogacy and abortion, and why there has been disagreement between feminists about the usefulness of these developments to women.

### **Module 6: Indigenous, Ethnic Minority and Black Feminist Politics**

This module will look at the contribution of indigenous, ethnic minority and Black feminists to the development of feminist theory.

### **Module 7: The Politics of Sexual Violence**

This module will look at the development of feminist theory around men's sexual violence towards women. We will concentrate on rape and relationship rape in particular and on the concept of consent.

### **Module 8: Lesbian Feminist Theory**

This module will look at the development of lesbian feminism and lesbian feminist theory, concentrating on the theorising of heterosexuality.

### **Module 9: Pornography**

Pornography is the topic that has revealed most clearly the different feminist perspectives involved in what have been called the "feminist sexuality debates". In this module we compare the radical feminist anti-porn position versus the libertarian pro-sex position.

## **Module 10: The Politics of Sex Work**

This module will examine differing feminist views on prostitution. These range from the sexual libertarian position, that prostitution is sex work and a job like any other, to the views of many radical feminist campaigners who view men's use of women in prostitution as a crime against women.

### **Reading List**

Readings will be a curated selection of materials available electronically.