

# FemSex the female sexuality workshop

## Syllabus for Spring 2010\*

**Our Mission:** The Female Sexuality Workshop is a semester long, not-for-credit program that aims to create a mindful, respectful, and open environment within which to explore identity and take ownership of desire. Participants engage in honest dialogue in order to validate their own experiences and build solidarity within a community of new people founded upon participation and shared commitment. The workshop explores what it means to take ownership of one's body, pleasure and education through group discussions and independent activities. Participants build ally relationships and camaraderie in a unique space designed to facilitate conversation of boundaries, desires, identities, and experiences. Peer facilitators encourage and challenge participants to develop empowered and informed relationships with themselves to bring out into the world. FemSex promotes leadership, agency, and consent in all areas of life. Topics include: pleasure, health, gender, consent, boundaries, body image, communication, orgasms, masturbation, sex, kink, and sexual identities.

\*Please note that this syllabus is tentative and may be subject to change throughout the semester.

Date	Meeting	Description
Wed 2/10 Thurs 2/11	Meeting 1	<b>INTRODUCTION</b> Welcome to FemSex! We will come together as a group for the first time, review the nitty gritty of workshop procedures, and negotiate our own safe space contract. We will discuss what participants hope to obtain by taking the workshop.
Mon 2/15 Tues 2/16	Meeting 2	<b>PRIVILEGE, LANGUAGE &amp; IDENTITY</b> Discussion focuses on how ideologies of race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, financial background and membership in various groups shape personal identities, experiences and relationships. Focusing on deconstructing stereotypes and generalizations in dealing with these topics, we will explore identity, power, and privilege from personal experiences.
Wed 2/17 Thurs 2/18	Meeting 3	<b>BODY IMAGE I</b> This meeting focusing on presentations of the body image project assignment as a jumping-off point to share and explore personal experiences with our bodies: how it feels to be inside our bodies, the different ways people view themselves and each other, what shapes our own self-images, and how this may affect our lives.
Wed 2/24 Thurs 2/25	Meeting 4	<b>BODY IMAGE II</b> How do our own families, communities, cultures, aesthetics and desires influence our concepts of beauty and health? How does this affect self-image? We will respond to the experience of sharing our body image projects and discuss readings pertaining to body image, sexual self-image and loving one's body.
Mon 3/1 Tue 3/2	Meeting 5	<b>FEMALE HEALTH AND ANATOMY</b> How many slang words do you know to describe female anatomy? What about stereotypes and myths? In section we'll discuss these and Dr. Miller from Brown Health Services will visit to answer questions about female sexual anatomy, as well as women's health issues surrounding sexual activity, menstrual cycles, yeast and vaginal infections, pregnancy and contraception, and more. <b>Speaker:</b> Dr. Miller from Brown Health Services
Wed 3/3 Thurs 3/4	Meeting 6	<b>MENSTRUATION</b> Gathering together for a "bleed-in", we will share our personal experiences with menstruation in an informal and comfortable setting. After discussing some of the social and cultural perceptions of the menstrual cycle, we'll turn to the advantages and disadvantages of various menstrual products (both pharmaceutical and alternative) including pads, tampons, glad rags, organic products, the diva cup, instead softcups, the keeper, and natural sea sponges.
Mon 3/8 Tues 3/9	Meeting 7	<b>REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES I</b> Discussion will revolve around the the cultural, ethnic, societal, religious, and political factors that affect individuals' reproductive choices. A speaker who works in the field of reproductive options will visit to discuss the abortion process explaining the medical and counseling procedures.
Wed 3/10 Thurs 3/11	Meeting 8	<b>REPRODUCTIVE CHOICES II</b> There are many options when it comes to having children, thus we hope to illuminate the diversity of

options available to individuals. We will examine a variety of methods: home birth, hospital birth, adoption, artificial insemination, egg/sperm donation, abortion, etc. A trained midwife will explain the birth process and alternative birthing practices.

**Speaker:** Midwife

Mon 3/15  
Tues 3/16

Meeting 9 **SEX I**

We will discuss our personal definitions of “sex” and examine how social, cultural, political, and economic factors can shape our personal definitions of and attitudes about sex. We will also discuss consent as it relates to sex and explore the continuum on which intimacy is based for each individual.

Wed 3/17  
Thurs 3/18

Meeting 10 **SEX II**

We will discuss the ways in which we perform our sexualities and explore various models of sexual behavior, including asexuality, abstinence, fantasy, kink, fetish, and more. We will also explore our attitudes about pleasure and desire and the role that they may play in our sexual choices. We will discuss some of the ways in which we experience, discover, seek out or share different kinds of pleasure.

Mon 3/22  
Tues 3/23

Meeting 11 **SAFER SEX AND STIs**

We will examine the uses and misuses of various safer sex devices and explore how they can be incorporated into activities. We'll cover safer sex and the risks, symptoms, and stages associated with various sexually transmitted infections. How do we become intimates, communicate our needs and concerns, and safely own our desires?

Wed 3/24  
Thurs 3/25

Meeting 12 **MASTURBATION AND ORGASM**

How does one masturbate? How is culture, biology and childhood/adolescent development of sexuality involved in orgasm? We will discuss masturbation and orgasm, looking at various models of the sexual response cycle. We will also discuss the idea of self-love and both negative and positive views of masturbation. We will answer questions, share experiences, and give tips for masturbation technique!  
Spring Break and Passover

3/29-4/6

Wed 4/7  
Thurs 4/8

Meeting 13 **SEXUALITY**

What is the role of intimacy in sexuality? How does it relate to the concept of emotional health? How are sexuality, power and privilege connected? How did we understand our own sexuality/sexualities? In section, we consider the differing levels of intimacy involved in various social activities. We will also continue our discussion about sex and how it relates to us on a personal level by examining the various constructs of sexuality that we've experienced.

Mon 4/12  
Tues 4/13

Meeting 14 **GENDER & EXPRESSION**

How do the terms 'gender', 'biological sex', and 'sexuality' relate (or not)? How does 'performance' relate to gender, if at all? We'll discuss gender, transgender, and gender-transgressive identities, encouraging ownership and validation of identities.

Wed 4/14  
Thurs 4/15

Meeting 15 **SEX TOYS**

Our speaker will present various sex toys and accessories, including clit stimulators, dildos, vibrating dildos, g-spot stimulators, butt plugs, anal beads, strap-ons, nipple clamps, floggers, lubricants, and more! This meeting will focus on our individual experiences and impressions of the advantages and disadvantages of sex toys. The discussion will focus on both the various materials (silicone, hard plastic, jelly latex, etc), as well as methods of cleaning and maintaining toys and other considerations (vibration, intensity, noise, price). We will talk about stigma surrounding sex toys and accessories and the idea of privilege and will share ideas for “home-made” sex toys and accessories. LFB

**Speaker:** Megan Andelloux

Mon 4/19  
Tues 4/20

Meeting 16 **VIOLATION OF BOUNDARIES**

We will each share a personal story about our experience/s with physical, emotional, and/or verbal violations. The storytelling will not be limited by time, so this class will run over the 2-hour time slot.

**Assignment:** Prepare a 2-4 page narrative about a time when your boundaries were physically, emotionally or verbally violated. This assignment will not be collected or seen by anyone other than you.

Wed 4/21  
Thurs 4/22

Meeting 17 **COMMUNICATION AND CONSENT**

We will discuss sexual boundaries, how we define consent and non-consent, methods of communicating both verbally and non-verbally, the relation between consent, desire and boundaries, some of the difficulties surrounding communication, and the goals of effective communication.

Mon 4/26  
Tue 4/27

Meeting 18 **RELATIONSHIP MODELS**

We will talk about a variety of relationship models, including monogamy, polyamory, multiple fidelity, and more. We will continue the discussion on trust, communication and consent as related to relationship models. We will also talk about emotional health, healthy relationships, and self care.

Participants will be encouraged to consider what is important to them in whatever kinds of relationships they may wish to have.

- Wed 4/28  
Thurs 4/29 Meeting 19 **PORN AND EROTICA**  
Porn screening! We'll examine and discuss a wide range of erotic texts and films--"mainstream," queer, feminist, fetish, etc.--focusing on their effects on female sexuality. We'll also talk about the causes and consequences of sex work, our own relationship with pornographic mediums, and whether or not sex in our bedrooms (reality) is anything like sex on a set (fantasy).  
**Assignment:** Write/design an anonymous piece of erotica to share with the class.
- Mon 5/3  
Tues 5/4 Meeting 20 **EMPOWERMENT AND BEGINNING WORKSHOP WRAP UP**  
What is power **and who's got it?** What it means to be empowered? What are the various sources of our personal powers? We will consider each topic in our curriculum as it relates to women's empowerment. We will discuss community building and support amongst women, self-esteem, and confidence building. We will also begin to debrief and reflect on our experiences in the workshop.  
**Assignment:** Present empowerment object.
- Wed 5/5  
Thurs 5/6 Meeting 21 **FINAL PROJECTS**  
Wow! Final projects already! Each femsexy will present phe's final project, a chance to either reflect on personal experiences of FemSex or further explore a topic discussed throughout the semester. Be creative! In the past, some of these projects have taken the form of visual art, video, poetry, exploring a new source/form of pleasure, engaging in a difficult conversation around sexuality, and much, much more!  
**Assignment:** Present final projects.
- Mon 5/10  
Tues 5/11 Meeting 22 **FINAL CLASS/ WORKSHOP DEBRIEF**  
Goodbye to a semester of FemSex! What have you gotten out of the workshop? Where do you wish to go from here, within your own life and within your communities? We'll fill out workshop evaluations, participate in some fun final class activities, and get excited for the final party!

**Other Assignments may include:**

Cunt Coloring: Color an anatomical picture from *The Cunt Coloring Book*.

Affirmation Assignment: Affirm someone in a manner of your choosing.

Speculum Self-Exploration: Use a speculum and mirror to explore your own anatomy, and write one page about the experience. We provide the specula and lube!

Birth/Adoption assignment: Talk to your parent(s) about the experience of your birth, adoption, or how they came to have you.

Pleasure Point: Find a new pleasure point or pleasurable activity, and write one page about the experience.

Empowerment Object: Bring in something that you find empowering to share with the class.