Prostitution in a Global Perspective, 1750-2012

Course Instructor: Simone Gamali Stewart
Instructor’s email: stewa35@jhu.edu

My office hours are Tuesday and Thursday from 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and by appointment. I am only on campus on Tuesdays and Thursdays, so appointments must be for these days.

Course Description

The notion that prostitution is the ‘world’s oldest profession’ suggests both that sex work has a long history, and that this history is a homogeneous one based on unchanging gender roles and economic relations. In this course, students will learn to question the latter assumption, and examine the ways in which sex work, social attitudes towards it, and state attempts to regulate or suppress it have changed over time. Examining topics such as the development of the ‘medical model’ of prostitution regulation in the nineteenth century, the rise of an international anti-prostitution movement in the 1880s and 1890s, the centrality of erotic labor to new forms of leisure culture in the interwar period, and the responses of twentieth century nationalists to the specter of sex work in contexts as diverse as Egypt, China and Argentina, the course will introduce students to a number of central works in the historiography of sexuality and gender.

Prostitution is a term that is taken for granted by scholars, yet it lends itself to explaining the relationship between sex and labor and coercion and pleasure that is derived from women’s bodies; and regional debates about regulation (of the population) policies. The organization of the course is roughly chronological, but also thematic. Thus, while it generally moves in a clear line from the eighteenth century to the present day, certain weeks (such as week seven, which focuses on male prostitution) cover a large time period and attempt to provide a longer history of a particular topic or practice that is not associated with a single historical moment. Through the readings and assignments, the class will investigate the extent to which sex work and its regulation have shaped and been shaped by particular notions of space, law, gender and race, and the ways in which the politics of sexuality have interacted with international humanitarianism, political economy, migration and globalization over the course of the past two hundred and fifty years.

Prostitution in a Global Perspective, 1750-2012

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

This course is a reading seminar. Students are expected to come to class having read the selections for the week closely and to participate in class discussions about the texts. There will be no official lecture; however, if the conversation suggests that knowledge in a particular area would benefit the discussion, I will give a brief lecture on the topic(s).
This class is run very much in the style of upper/graduate-level courses. With that being said, freshmen and sophomores should be challenged, but not overwhelmed, by discussions. Should anyone believe that they need assistance in successfully completing the course and participating in discussions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Students are expected to watch the three films that are assigned by the Sunday before we meet for that assigned week. They constitute another ‘text’ that we will discuss in class and thus they are part of the compulsory preparation for the class.

**Class participation and presentation (35%)**: The course requires each student to make a fifteen to twenty minute class presentation. Students are tasked with introducing that day’s readings (not just a mere summary of the text/s) and presenting three or more preliminary discussion questions to the class.

**Papers**

Two short papers (30%):

1. **Primary source Assignment (15%)**: 3-4 pages. Due in Week Five class; paper to be submitted as a Word document to me via email on midnight of the Sunday before Week Five. From the list of primary sources under Week Five’s topic ‘Contagious Diseases and Moral Reform,’ choose one, and write a 3-4 page analysis of this document as a source for the history of nineteenth century prostitution regulation and abolitionism in Britain. Did the historians we read for this week use this source? In what ways did they use it? How might you have used it differently, or what further information can this source give you that you did not learn from the readings? Using these questions as a guide, critically analyze your source, paying attention to its author(s), genre, structure, intended readership and tone.

2. **Digital history project (15%)**: 3-4 pages. Due in Week Nine class; paper to be submitted as a Word document to me via email on midnight of the Sunday before Week Nine. Students should bring a hardcopy of the paper to the class on Monday. This project has two parts. In Part 1 (1-2 pages), critically analyze the spatial distribution of arrests for prostitution on the basis of either 1) race or 2) age using the information provided on the Stanford Spatial History Project ‘Prostitution in Philadelphia: Arrests Made 1912-1918’, at: http://www.stanford.edu/group/spatialhistory/cgi-bin/site/viz.php?id=267. In Part II (2 pages) discuss the ways in which historians such as those we have read this semester could use this information to make larger conclusions about prostitution, law, crime and regulation in early twentieth century Philadelphia. What broader conclusions could you make, and what are the limits of data such as this as a historical tool? How may its specific spatial representation as part of the Stanford Spatial History Project influence its utility? For background reading on the uses and limits of digital spatial history projects I highly recommend you read William Thomas and Edward Ayers, ‘An Overview: The Differences Slavery Made: A Close Analysis of Two American Communities,’ *American Historical Review*, 108:5, 2003, pp. 1299-1307.
*Students are encouraged to read, Mary Ting Yi Lui, *The Chinatown Trunk Mystery: Murder, Miscegenation, and Other Dangerous Encounters in Turn-of-the-Century New York City* (2007), pp. 17-51 which, while it does not speak about prostitution, addresses the issue of spatial policing and race. This will allow students to see these issues at play and understand how to better analyze the Spatial History Project findings for their paper.

3. **Historiographical review paper (35%)**: Due Friday of the final week of class; paper to be submitted as a Word document to me via email by noon. Students will write a final, 10 to 12 page historiographical paper related to themes covered in this course. You may choose, for example, to examine historical writing on sex work in one particular country or region, investigate the literature on a certain theoretical problem (such as the relationship between prostitution and pornography), or analyze the historiography of an especially contentious event (such as the promulgation of the 1910 Mann Act in the US). You must meet with me in office hours by the end of Week Ten to discuss your topic for this paper, and a finalized statement of your topic should be emailed to me by the end of Week Ten. Any significant changes of topic before the deadline should be checked with me.

**Paper extensions will be granted only as a result of medically documented illness.**

**Grading Breakdown**

Class participation and presentation 35%
Primary Source paper 15%
Digital History paper 15%
Historiographical paper: 35%

**Grading Rubric:**

**Thesis**: All written work should have thesis; that is, a central argument which you are able to present at the beginning of your paper, illuminate through historical analysis over the course of your paper, and which should flow naturally to the conclusion of your paper.

**Structure and Argumentation**: All ideas should flow logically, underlining a clearly identifiable argument, and possible counter-arguments should be considered and defused.

**Evidence**: Key to a good history paper is use of evidence to buttress your arguments, from either primary or secondary sources (depending on the requirements of the paper). All sources must be properly cited. If you are unsure about the correct format of citations consult the Chicago Manual of Style’s website (http://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide.html).

**Language**: All papers should be written using correct grammar and spelling, with coherent paragraph structure and clear language. If you have any questions about essay
writing conventions do not hesitate to ask me or visit me in office hours; you can also visit the Writing Center.

**Textbook (To be purchased from whichever source you choose):**


**WEEK ONE: Does the “Oldest Profession” Have a History? Part One**

31st January

Introduction

2nd February


**WEEK TWO: Does the “Oldest Profession” Have a History? Part Two**

FILM SCREENING: *Dangerous Beauty, 1998* (Available as a DVD on Netflix and to rent for $3.99 using Amazon video. You may also request/view it at the library.)

7th February


9th February


**WEEK THREE: Bordellos and Bawdy Houses: Sex Work in the Eighteenth Century Atlantic World**

14th February

252.

16th February


**WEEK FOUR:** Venereal Disease and Medical Control in the Nineteenth Century

21st February


23rd February


**WEEK FIVE:** Contagious Diseases and Moral Reform: Regulationists versus Abolitionists

*Primary Source Paper Due in Class*

Primary Sources (choose one of the following):

1. The Shield, Issue 1, March 1870 (Josephine Butler’s abolitionist newspaper). Available on the course Blackboard.

28th February

2nd March


WEEK SIX: Intersections: Sex Work, Gender and Race in European Imperialism

7th March


9th March


WEEK SEVEN: Preserving the Hygiene of the Nation: The Nationalist Response to Sex Work

13th March


15th March

Antoinette Burton, *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and

**WEEK EIGHT:** Spring Break.

**WEEK NINE:** From Trade to Hustlers: Historicizing Male Prostitution

FILM SCREENING: My Hustler (USA, 1965)

28th March


30th March


**WEEK NINE:** Vixen or Victim? Narratives of White Slavery at the Fin-de-Siècle

*Digital History Paper Due in Class*

4th April


6th April


**WEEK TEN:** The Flapper and the Dancing Girl: Leisure Culture and Erotic Labor in the Early Twentieth Century
FILM SCREENING: ‘The Goddess’ (1934, China)

11th April

NO CLASS

13th April


WEEK ELEVEN: The Sexual Front: Prostitution and War in the Twentieth Century

18th April

NO CLASS

20th April


WEEK TWELVE: Sex Wars: The Late Twentieth Century Sex Work Debates

25th April

Nan D. Hunter, ‘Contextualizing the Sexuality Debates’, in Lisa Duggan and Nan D


27th April


**WEEK THIRTEEN:** Sex Across Borders: Sex Tourism and the Trafficking Paradigm

Part One

**FILM SCREENING:** Lilya 4-Ever (Sweden, 2003)

*Historiography paper due this Friday at noon*

2nd May


4th May