COURSE TITLE: The Psychology of Human Sexuality

COURSE CODE: PSY 238

CREDITS: 3

CONTACT HOURS: 45

CATALOG DESCRIPTION:

This course presents a scientific foundation for the understanding of the psychological, physiological, social, and behavioral aspects of human sexuality. In addition to studying historical changes in sexual practices and attitudes, the course will review and evaluate current research, issues and concerns about sexuality, in order to provide contemporary and relevant curriculum material. Topics include psychosexual development, gender roles, sexual orientation, sexual anatomy, alternate methods of reproduction, pregnancy/birth, contraception, sexually transmitted diseases, sex education, sexism, love and attraction, sexual abuse, sexual dysfunctions, sex therapy, paraphilias, and sexuality through the life cycle.

Prerequisite(s): PSY 101.

Credits: 3

PREREQUISITES: PSY 101, PSY 130, or PSY 131 or permission from Department Chairperson.

REQUIRED FOR: None

ELECTIVE FOR: All curricula with a social science elective

GENERAL EDUCATION: This course satisfies 3 credits of the Social and Behavioral Science competency area of the General Education requirements at Farmingdale State College.

JUSTIFICATION
PSY 238 Psychology of Human Sexuality

PSY 238 fulfills the intent of the Social and Behavioral Science competency area by applying a scientific and research based perspective to intra and interpersonal variations of the human sexual experience. For example, students learn about sociolinguistic studies in which certain types of communication patterns result in improved interpersonal relationships between females and males. Although the course focuses on the typical sexual behaviors that have evolved in Western civilization, frequent cross-cultural comparisons are presented to limit sexual ethnocentrism. The Psychology of Human Sexuality course concerns itself also with those variations in human behavior that deviate from cultural or societal expectations.

Sexuality, as defined in its broadest sense, and not necessarily including sexual experience, impacts many aspects of life. Through the study of human sexuality, students can begin to understand and appreciate some of the historical and sociocultural forces and events that have influenced our identities, values and attitudes. Contemporary culture in the United States is sexually saturated—one only has to turn on the TV, read political commentary, or observe teenage behavior—but misperception and misinformation abound. Without accurate information about sexuality, students are unable either to critically evaluate their own behavior or engage in a decision-making process that could be adaptive, productive and personally fulfilling.

In the Psychology of Human Sexuality course, results of research studies provide data that reflect patterns and trends important in understanding contemporary societal problems (e.g., AIDS epidemic, child sexual abuse, date rape, gay rights). Recent advances in reproductive technology enable students to understand the influence of scientific progress on conception, pregnancy and birth and the implications for society of these remarkable developments. Public policy and legislation about sexuality (e.g., age of consent, abortion restrictions, domestic partnerships) provide recurrent themes that enable students to critically examine and appraise the resulting implications and consequences.
When studying the Psychology of Human Sexuality the student should be able to:

I. Explain the need for, and benefit of, sexuality education. Discuss what should be taught to children at what ages. Describe the controversy surrounding sexuality education.

II. Define ethnocentrism and discuss cross-cultural perspectives on sexuality. Describe the differing roles of men and women in different cultures.

III. Trace the history of sexuality and list the contributions of significant individuals, e.g., Freud, Kinsey, Masters and Johnson.

IV. Describe several types of research in the field of human sexuality. State the usefulness and limitations of surveys, case studies, correlational studies, and experimental design. Note several significant research studies in the area of sexuality.

V. Describe the “sexual revolutions” of the 1960s and its influence on contemporary culture and behavior. Mention the changing roles of men and women and the increased frequency of premarital sexual behavior.

VI. Using diagrams label the different parts of the male and female reproductive systems and the internal and external genitals. Explain the functioning of each part and its role in sexual response and/or reproduction.

VII. Explain the importance of both breast and testicular self-examination. Define mammography and explain who should have this diagnostic examination. Discuss the high rate of breast cancer in the United States and the risk factors involved.

VIII. Describe both the phases of the menstrual cycle and the processes involved in sperm production. Explain the relationship between hormones and sexuality for both males and females.

IX. Describe the phases of the sexual response cycle. Compare and contrast sexual response in males and females. Discuss the view of women as asexual throughout most of history.

X. Define male circumcision and state the advantages and disadvantages of this procedure.

XI. Explain what causes sexually transmitted diseases, how they are spread and who can get them. List the symptoms of the different STDs and the treatments and the relationship to infertility.

XII. Compare and contrast the various contraceptive methods. Discuss the theoretical and actual failure rates. Explain the steps in the fertility awareness method.

XIII. State the four types of abortion procedures and when each would be used. Discuss the current issues surrounding abortion from pro-life and pro-choice perspectives.

XIV. Discuss the process of fertilization, the stages of gestation, the development of the fetus, and the three stages of labor.

XV. Explain what is meant by reproductive technology: give examples of each type of procedure (e.g., IVF, GIFT, ICSI). Discuss the controversy surrounding surrogate births and post-menopausal pregnancies.

XVI. Define gender identity and gender role. Discuss the development of gender roles in childhood and adolescence.

XVII. Define and differentiate the concepts of gender identity disorder, hermaphroditism, transsexuality, transvestism, and gender dysphoria.

XVIII. Discuss the concept of sexual orientation. Compare the following: homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual. Tract the history of attitudes towards gay people in the
United States and in other countries and cultures. Discuss the impact of homophobia in contemporary society.

XIX. Describe the events and psychological processes during sexual development over the life span. Summarize the changes that occur at puberty in males and females.

XX. Discuss the sexual behaviors of children, adolescents and adults. Explore adult life styles in terms of cohabitation, singlehood, marriage, divorce, widowhood. List the changes that occur in physiological sexual response as part of the aging process.

XXI. Compare and contrast the following: friendship, infatuation, intimacy, romantic love, jealousy. Describe the components of a lasting relationship: compromise, commitment, communication, caring and consideration.

XXII. Compare and contrast the sexual problems that can occur in both females and males. Discuss the causes of these problems and the treatments and therapies available.

XXIII. Explain the term paraphilia and how it differs from sexual variation. Define the following paraphilias: voyeurism, fetishism, pedophilia, sadism. Discuss theories of their development and how they are treated. State how sexual behaviors may be illegal in some cases.

XXIV. Discuss the different types of sexual victimization such as rape, incest, coercion, abuse and harassment. Trace the history of attitudes toward rape and victims of rape.

XXV. Discuss sexuality and the law in the United States and from a cross-cultural perspective. Use examples from prostitution and pornography.

XXVI. Explain the importance of communication in sexual relationships. Describe research showing how men and women use language differently and how it can affect their interpersonal relationships.