GSWS 321-4: INTRO TO PORN STUDIES:
THE POETICS AND POLITICS OF SEX (D200)

Professor: Dr. Vaibhav Saria  
Email: vsaria@sfu.ca  
Office: AQ 5099  
Office hours: TBA  
Lecture: Wednesdays 9:30 – 13:20; AQ 4140

COURSE DESCRIPTION:
On delivering the verdict on charges of obscenity in the film Les Amants, Potter Stewart uttered the now famous lines, “I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description ["hard-core pornography"]; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that.” Why is pornography so difficult to define but yet very easy to recognize? Through a genealogical method this course will investigate the circulation of images and ideas that constitute pornography and study the anxieties that it has generated at various moments in time and how these anxieties are related to the disciplining and policing of sexuality. It traces the various academic debates, and events in film- making, literature and everyday life related to pornography, which will be used as prisms to understand and study sexuality. If we locate pornography as the site where we can study the fantasies and desires of our culture then what do these fantasies tell us about the human condition and why do cinematic or visual depictions of these fantasies make us nervous and incite panic? Using pornography as an entry point, we will study the fantasies of our culture and how they link up with notions of health, morality, governmentality, citizenship and censorship.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS:
For more detailed information please see the GSWS website: http://www.sfu.ca/gsws/courses/Educational_Goals.html

COURSE TEXTS AND COURSEWARE:
All textbooks will be available through the library.

COURSE EVALUATION AND ASSIGNMENTS:
• Attendance and Participation: 10%  
  You are permitted one unexcused absence. More than 2 absences without a medical note will result in the loss of one letter grade. Participation means coming to class on time, having completed the readings, and engaging with the discussions in class. It can include playing an active role in small group activities and/or posting relevant links in the canvas discussion section before or during class.
• Midterm Essay 1: 30%
• Midterm Essay 2: 30%
• Final Essay: 30%

PREREQUISITE: 15 units