Sexuality is at the centre of western culture. It plays a central role in determining modern identity. This course traces the emergence of modern sexual identity by exploring how meanings attached to sexuality and sexual identity have been shaped by medicine, popular culture, politics, and the education system, to name but a few. Through a critical examination of how these meanings are constructed, this course shows how that which we think is most natural – sexual desire and identity – are products of cultural forces and political imperatives and are therefore subject to historical change. At the end of the course students will be able to see contemporary sexual politics in much more nuanced ways.

The material in this course is arranged chronologically, thus students will learn how change over time challenges claims that sexuality is fixed in nature, driven by biology, and therefore unchanging and unchangeable. We will also explore how sexuality is embedded in ideas about gender, class and race. Students will be able to apply these theoretical concepts and procedures in this and other social science and humanities courses.

This course will teach students how to think like a historian. The way historians organize knowledge is to first identify a historical problem, choose an appropriate conceptual or theoretical framework for analyzing their primary source documents, then arrive at an independent set of conclusions about the meaning and significance of their topic of study. This course achieves this by a) identifying “sexuality” as a topic of historical study, b) introducing the ideas put forward by key thinkers c) integrating primary source documents into lectures, tutorial workshops, and assigned readings d) reading secondary source literature (scholarly history) to examine the conclusions that various historians have come to concerning the history of sexuality.

Course Requirements:
Students must successfully complete all assignments in order to pass this course.

Assignments:
- Primary Document Analysis: Week 5, 10%
- Primary Document Analysis: Week 8, 15%
- Short Essay Assignment: Week 11, 20%
- Participation: Weekly, 20%
- Midterm: Week 6, 15%
- Final Assignment/Exam: 20%