WOMEN'S STUDIES PROGRAM

SPRING 1991

BARRBARA BLAKELY

Lec.: Thur. 13:30-15:20
Tut.: Thur. 15:30-16:20

W.S. 303-3

WOMEN AND PORNOLIOGRAPHY

Pornography is the most readily available form of sex education, easily obtained at the local grocery or video store. It is also a multibillion dollar industry in North America. Debate rages, on what it is, what it means, how it works, and what to do about it, raising painful divisions among feminists, philosophers, legislators, and social scientists.

One point of view focuses on pornography as a representation of sex, one which is inappropriate, offensive and/or harmful. On this view, the abundance of available pornography has dangerous consequences for women and children, for relations between men and women, and for our experience of sexuality. A second point of view approaches pornography as a linkage between sex and domination. On this view, gender is hierarchy, a bipolar distribution of power, where men may dominate and women submit. Sexuality and sexual pleasure, then, become dynamics which eroticize this hierarchy. Yet a third point of view, in considerable contrast to these two defends pornography as having the potential to sexually empower women - even according to feminist criteria. On this view, only if sex itself is viewed negatively will any sexual representation be considered pornographic. Women's legacy of shame and silence around sex can be remedied only by more sexual representation, not less. So the remedies suggested above are challenged as more damaging than pornography itself. To any limitations which may exist in pornography at present, alternatives are to be developed according to women's/feminists' own criteria. Debate rages as to whether any "erotica" actually developed here to date are actually "feminist."

This course will review and examine, then compare and contrast these three points of view. Before doing this, we will take some time to look at some pornography itself, so that we will have the data against which to test these theories. (We will use magazines obtained through my work with the B.C. Periodical Review Board.)

We will conclude with an examination and evaluation of remedies offered by each of these points of view.

(over)
REQUIRED READING


ASSIGNMENTS

20% Tutorial presentation
40% Two short papers (5-10 pages)
40% Research paper (20 pages)

Prerequisite: 60 credit hours or WS 100.

This course may be designated as 3 upper division credits in Sociology for students who obtain permission for this from the Sociology Department.

This course may be designated as 3 upper division credits in Communication.

TUTORIALS WILL BE HELD DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF CLASS.