

## SEX AND SOCIALISM

REES 1680/GSWs 1680/ANTH 1688

# Tentative syllabus – Subject to Change



Prof. K. R. Ghodsee

“Sex can be the site for talking about very many other things besides sex.”

–Dagmar Herzog, *Sex After Fascism*, 2005

Women’s emancipation and sexual equality with men was a bedrock principle of all utopian socialist, scientific socialist, and communist movements in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Leftist idealists imagined that a world without private property would liberate women from bourgeois monogamous marriage, an institution that rendered them economically dependent on men. By granting women full citizenship rights and universal suffrage combined with opportunities for formal employment outside of the home, socialists believed they could challenge and ultimately dismantle the traditional family, thereby liberating women from the shackles of millennia of patriarchal oppression. This course investigates the 19<sup>th</sup> century theoretical foundations of socialist and communist feminisms, and how the conflicted relationship between class, sex, and sexuality evolved over time in different cultural contexts. Although few experiments with leftist feminism were successful in the long run, and often led to a retrenchment of “traditional values,” they did provide radical new frameworks for thinking about the role of intimate relations in shaping ideological superstructures. Students will examine the practical application of these theoretical ideas about gender and sexuality in 20<sup>th</sup> century state socialist nations in Eastern Europe, as well as their continuing influence on feminist politics in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

### **Required Books:**

Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, (available online in full text or to buy in hard copy).

Wendy Z. Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993)

Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

Kristen Ghodsee, *Why Women Have Better Sex Under Socialism: And Other Arguments for Economic Independence* (Bold Type Books, 2020)

Course Packet and Online readings posted to Canvas

## **Course Requirements**

### **Reading – 50-80 pages of reading per week**

#### **Midterm – (30 Percent)**

- Students must complete a midterm exam that will test on the course readings, asking short answer and essay questions about major themes, topics, and authors of the semester thus far.

#### **Short Course Paper – (20 percent)**

- Students must write a short expository paper in response to a prompt given by the professor. Papers should be 3-4 pages in length (double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman Font with 1-inch margins). Papers will be deducted 2 points for each day they are late.

#### **Long Course Paper – (35 percent)**

- Students must write a research paper on a topic that fits within the scope of one or more weeks of the course. Topics must be approved by the professor. Papers should be 8-10 pages in length (double-spaced in 12-point Times New Roman Font with 1-inch margins) and represent independent research on a topic of the student's choice. Topics must be pre-approved by the Instructor at least one week prior to the due date. Papers will be submitted online and scanned for plagiarism. Papers will be deducted 2 points for each day they are late.

#### **Attendance and Participation – (15 percent)**

- *Regular attendance is expected. Failure to attend may affect your final grade. Please speak to me directly about absences. The Course Absence Report system will not be used for this course.*
- *Students are allowed two free absences and will lose two points for each unexcused absence thereafter. I will begin keep track of absences after the 3rd class meeting. **PLEASE NOTE: IF YOU JOIN THE COURSE AFTER THE 4th CLASS MEETING, YOU WILL HAVE EXPENDED ALL FREE ABSENCES.***
- *Everyone is expected to participate in class discussions. Your grade for participation will not only reflect how often you contributed to our class discussions, but the degree to which your*

*contributions were constructive and generative of further response(s) from your fellow classmates. Please see me early on in the semester outside of class to discuss ways to effectively participate in our seminar if you are concerned about your performance in this regard.*

**Email:**

From time to time, I will need to make announcements about the course outside of class time. I ask that you please check your email at least once every two days and be sure to read any emails from me.

**Academic Integrity:**

It is your responsibility to be familiar with the University's Code of Academic Integrity. Instances of academic dishonesty will be referred to the Office of Student Conduct for adjudication. See: [http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai\\_codeofacademicintegrity.html](http://www.upenn.edu/academicintegrity/ai_codeofacademicintegrity.html)

**Grading:**

Grading will not be done on a curve, and **grading will not be done in Canvas.**

For papers: All papers will be assigned a numeric value corresponding with a letter grade using the following criteria:

- A-range = outstanding, nearly flawless work; assignment(s) completed thoroughly; technically excellent; evidence of creativity and/or inspiration, deep contextual grasp of issues and connections among issues; and ability to synthesize individual elements into broader narratives or analyses.
- B-range = good work; all aspects of assignment(s) completed thoroughly and competently; technically competent (though perhaps not perfect) in spelling, grammar, format, citations; presentation adequate; does not consistently show inspiration, creativity, deeper grasp of connections, interpretations, and/or synthesis among elements.
- C-range = less than fully satisfactory work; assignment(s) not completed thoroughly or according to instructions; basic grasp of issues not always evident; more than occasional technical flaws.
- D = basic work of course (or assignment) not done, little effort evident.

Assignments in the class are not weighted. At the end of the semester the numeric grade will be converted into letter grades according to the following system: 99-100 (A+), 94-98 (A), 90-93 (A-), 87-89(B+), 83-86 (B), 80-82 (B-), 77-79 (C+), 73-76(C), 70-72 (C-), 60-69 (D), 60 and below (F)

**Electronic Devices**

No laptops, tablets, or other electronic devices are allowed in the classroom without a note from the dean in charge of learning disabilities. Please turn your mobile phones off. Students should not use recording devices without previous consent of the instructor.



## **TENTATIVE SYLLABUS (SUBJECT TO CHANGE)**

**Dates are not yet fixed**

### **Week One: Introduction**

***For Monday, August 27***

*Class description and introductions*

***For Wednesday, August 29***

Read Chapter: Robert Heilbroner, “Dreams of the Utopian Socialists,” in *The Worldly Philosophers*, 1953 (pdf on Canvas)

### **Week Two: The Utopian Socialists**

***For Monday, September 3***

Read: Leslie Goldstein, “Early Feminist Themes in French Utopian Socialism: The St.-Simonians and Fourier.” (pdf on Canvas)

***For Wednesday, September 5***

Read: Dominique Desanti, “Flora Tristan: Rebel Daughter of the Revolution,” in *Rebel daughters: women and the French Revolution*, edited by Sara E. Melzer and Leslie W. Rabine, 1992 (pdf on Canvas)

### **Week Three: Comparative Feminisms**

***For Monday, September 10***

Read:

- Karen Offen, “Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach” (pdf on Canvas)
- “Why girls from former Soviet countries do better in math:”  
<https://qz.com/1300084/why-girls-from-former-soviet-countries-do-better-in-math/>
- “The tech sector has a big problem with women. Bulgaria has the answer:”  
<https://www.calvertjournal.com/articles/show/10944/tech-equality-why-bulgaria-is-beacon-for-gender-diversity>
- “Eastern Europe leads the developed world in female doctors,”  
<https://qz.com/563322/eastern-europe-leads-the-developed-world-in-female-doctors/>

***For Wednesday, September 12***

Read:

Kristen Ghodsee & Julia Mead, “What Has Socialism Ever Done for Women?” (pdf on Canvas)

## **Week Four: Foundational Texts – Karl Marx and V.I. Lenin**

### ***For Monday, September 17***

Read: Karl Marx, “Wage Labor and Capital.” (pdf on Canvas)

### ***For Wednesday, September 19***

Read:

- Phil Gasper, “Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism.”  
<https://socialistworker.org/2008/12/02/imperialism-the-highest-stage-of-capitalism>
- V.I. Lenin, “Imperialism as a special stage of capitalism”  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch07.htm>
- V.I. Lenin, “The place of imperialism in history.”  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1916/imp-hsc/ch10.htm>

## **Week Five: Foundational Texts – August Bebel, *Woman and Socialism***

### ***For Monday, September 24***

Read:

- Read August Bebel, “Woman as a sex being,” in *Woman and Socialism*,  
(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/bebel/1879/woman-socialism/ch07.htm>)
- Read: August Bebel, “Modern Marriage,” in *Woman and Socialism*,  
(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/bebel/1879/woman-socialism/ch08.htm>)
- Read: August Bebel, “Disruption of the Family,” in *Woman and Socialism*,  
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/bebel/1879/woman-socialism/ch09.htm>

### ***For Wednesday, September 26***

Read:

- Read: August Bebel, “Woman in the Future,” in *Woman and Socialism*,  
(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/bebel/1879/woman-socialism/ch28.htm>)
- Read: August Bebel, “On Homosexuality and the Penal Code,”  
(<https://www.marxists.org/archive/bebel/1898/01/13.htm>)

## **Week Six: Foundational Texts – Friedrich Engels, *The Origins of the Family, Private Property, and the State***

### ***For Monday, October 1***

Read Online or in Print: Engels, “The Family” “The Greek Gens,” “The Rise of the Athenian State” (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/index.htm>)

### ***For Wednesday, October 3***

Read Online or in Print:

- Engels, “The Gens and the State in Rome,” and “Barbarism and Civilization.” (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1884/origin-family/index.htm>)
- “Engels was right!” <https://www.marxist.com/engels-was-right.htm>.

### **Week Seven: Foundational Texts – Kollontai and Lenin**

***For Monday, October 8***

Read:

- Alexandra Kollontai, “Make Way for Winged Eros: A Letter to Working Youth.” (pdf of Canvas)
- Clara Zetkin, “Women, Marriage and Sex,” in Reminiscences of Lenin, (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/zetkin/1924/reminiscences-of-lenin.htm#h07>)

***Wednesday, October 10 - FALL BREAK - NO CLASS***

### **Week Eight: Foundational Texts – Kollontai and Zetkin**

***For Monday, October 15***

Read:

- V. I. Lenin, “Speech at the first All-Russia Congress of Working Women, 1919” (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1918/nov/19.htm>)
- Nadezhda Krupskaya, “Preface to The Emancipation of Women,” <https://www.marxists.org/archive/krupskaya/works/krup1.htm>
- Read: Alexandra Kollontai: “Communism and the family” (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1920/communism-family.htm>)
- Read: Alexandra Kollontai, “Theses on Communist Morality in the Sphere of Marital Relations,” (<https://www.marxists.org/archive/kollonta/1921/theses-morality.htm>)

SHORT PAPER DUE IN CLASS

***For Wednesday, October 17***

IN CLASS MIDTERM

### **Week Nine: The Russian Revolution, Part I**

***For Monday, October 22***

Read:

- Wendy Goldman, “Chapter 1” and “Chapter 2” in *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936*

- Fyodor Gladkov, “The Deserted Factory” and “The Red Kerchief” in *Cement* (pdf on Canvas)

***For Wednesday, October 24***

Read Book: Wendy Goldman, “Chapter 3” and “Chapter 5” in *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936* [DO NOT READ CHAPTER 4]

**Week Ten: The Russian Revolution, Part II**

***For Monday, October 29***

Read Book: Wendy Goldman, “Chapter 6” and “Chapter 7” in *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936*

***For Wednesday, October 31***

Read:

- “Chapter 8” and “Conclusion” in *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917–1936*
- Robert Leach, “I Want a Baby – Three Times.” (pdf on Canvas)

**Week Eleven: Woman and World War II**

***For Monday, November 5***

Read:

- Anna Krylova, “Stalinist Identity from the Viewpoint of Gender: Rearing a Generation of Professionally Violent Women-Fighters in 1930s Stalinist Russia.” *Gender & History*. Nov2004, Vol. 16 Issue 3: 626-65 (pdf on Canvas)
- John Erickson, “Night witches, snipers, and laundresses,” *History Today*. Jul90, Vol. 40 Issue 7 (pdf on Canvas)

***For Wednesday, November 7***

Read Chapter: Anna Krylova, Chapter 6, “To be a Woman Commander – That was great!” in *Soviet Women in Combat* (pdf on canvas)

**Week Twelve: Cold War Sex**

***For Monday, November 12***

Read:

- Dagmar Herzog, “Cold War Cultures: 1945-1965” in *Sexuality in Europe: A Twentieth Century History* (PDF on Canvas)



- Elaine Tyler May, ‘Explosive Issues: Sex, Women and the Bomb,’ and “Brinkmanship: Sexual Containment on the Home Front” in *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (PDF on Canvas)

## COURSE PAPER OUTLINE DUE

### ***For Wednesday, November 14***

Read:

- Christopher Phelps, “On Socialism and Sex [1952]: An Introduction,” <http://newpol.org/content/socialism-and-sex-introduction>
- Judit Takacs, “Disciplining gender and (homo)sexuality in state-socialist Hungary in the 1970s. (pdf on Canvas)
- Samuel Clowes Huneke, “Gay liberation behind the Iron Curtain,” <http://bostonreview.net/gender-sexuality/samuel-clowes-huneke-gay-liberation-behind-iron-curtain>

## **Week Thirteen: Love in the German Democratic Republic**

### ***For Monday, November 19***

Read Book: Josie McLellan, Chapters 1, 2 & 3 in *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR*

### ***For Wednesday, November 21***

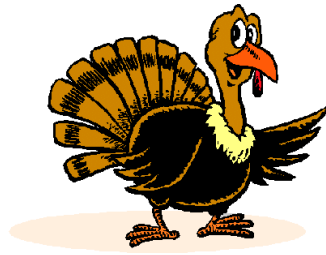
Read Book: Chapters 4 & 5 in Josie McLellan, *Love in the Time of Communism: Intimacy and Sexuality in the GDR*

### **Week Fourteen: Sex and Socialism**

***For Monday, November 26***

Read: Agnieszka Kościńska, “Beyond Viagra: Sex Therapy in Poland,” *Czech Sociological Review* 20, no. 6 (2014) (pdf on Canvas); and Kateřina Lišková, “Sex under Socialism: From Emancipation of Women to Normalized Families in Czechoslovakia,” *Sexualities* 19, nos. 1/2 (2016): 211–235(pdf on Canvas).

***For Wednesday - THANKSGIVING BREAK – NO CLASS***



### **Week Fifteen: Experiences of intimacy**

***For Monday, December 3***

Read: Kristen Ghodsee, “Capitalism between the sheets” and “To each according to her needs” (Pdf on Canvas)

***LONG COURSE PAPER DUE***

***For Wednesday, December 5:***

Discussion and Final Review