



Sexuality & Sexual Health in the Netherlands: A Cultural Comparison to the USA

Course Details

Course Designator & Number: XXXX nnnn

Number of Credits: n

Language of Instruction: English

Contact Hours: n

Instructor: Kristen Mark, PhD, MPH, kpmark@umn.edu

Course Description

In this study abroad experience, this course will provide a cultural comparative study of human sexuality and sexual health education in a context where sexual health outcomes are the best in the world. The Netherlands has comprehensive sex education, regulated and decriminalized prostitution, and was one of the first to legalize gay marriage. With their openness to sexuality and emphasis on talking about sex and sexuality with parents, peers, and educators from a young age, sexuality is seen as a healthy part of human development rather than something to be ashamed of. Students will be immersed in this culture and learn from their model of sexuality and sexual health education. The study abroad experience will last two weeks.

Research, theoretical, and substantive issues relevant to studying sexual health will be covered. Students will critically evaluate sexual health education programs in school and community settings, sexuality research, develop depth and breadth of understanding key issues in sexual health promotion, and learn the various forms of inquiry used in the study of human sexuality.

Course Objectives

This course is taught from a learner-centered perspective, which emphasizes the exploration of meaning and content knowledge through personal and interpersonal discovery. Throughout the semester, students will:

1. Learn about the differences between the United States and Netherlands systems of sexuality and sexual health education. In this, they will learn the material necessary for teaching sexuality education in the United States and the reasons behind why differences exist.
2. Challenge attitudes toward contemporary issues such as gay marriage, access to contraceptives and abortion, and abstinence-only sex education and learn the content necessary to understand how these attitudes are formed.
3. Engage in a critical cultural comparison analysis regarding sexual health outcomes as described by the World Health Organization based on their service learning experiences abroad.
4. Develop an appropriate depth and breadth of understanding of key issues in human sexuality throughout the lifespan, recognizing the implications of course content and putting it into a broader context;
5. Develop skills in personal attitude recognition; become aware of personal values, biases, and beliefs regarding sexual issues;
6. Develop moral maturity related to sexual issues; specifically, understanding that aspects of human sexuality can be considered and evaluated in many ways. It is hoped that students will become more aware and accepting of the lifestyles and sexual value systems of others, especially those which are divergent from their own;
7. Develop independence of thought, and the ability to challenge accepted truths about human sexuality and think critically about sexuality as it appears in research and the media;
8. Understand the various forms of inquiry used in the study of human sexuality, and be able to assess the strengths and limitations as well as the cultural and historical impact of these forms;
9. Improve communication skills and increase comfort with communication about sexual issues and behavior;
10. Develop a love of learning, or intellectual curiosity, regarding human sexuality, by becoming engaged with course content, and reflecting on the values you hold related to sexuality.

This course will focus on critical analysis and will be writing-intensive. Students will be expected to articulate the implications of differences between the United States and the Netherlands with regard to sexuality and sexual health education. Students will also be assessed based on reflective discussions and a final reflective paper (research reflective paper for graduate students) to document any perspective shifts experienced during the course. Students will be required to create a lesson plan on the topic of their choice and will be asked to distinguish how it would be taught in the United States (based on SIECUS guidelines) versus the Netherlands. A final cultural comparative paper will be completed by all students.

Through class instruction, field trips, and service-learning, students will learn the core subject of the courses in addition to the cultural differences.

Required Reading / Materials

Readings are posted to Canvas or provided within the course setting. There is no required text for this course.

Grading

Grading Rubric

Letter Grade	Score or Percentage	Description
A	93–100	Achievement that is outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements.
A-	90–92	Achievement that is significantly above the level necessary to meet course requirements.
B+	87–89	
B	83–86	
B-	80–82	Achievement that meets the course requirements in every respect.
C+	77–79	
C	73–76	
C-	70–72	Achievement that is worthy of credit even though it fails to fully meet the course requirements.
D+	67–69	
D	60–66	
F	0–59	Represents failure (or no credit) and signifies that the work was either (1) completed but at a level of achievement that is not worthy of credit or (2) was not completed and there was no agreement between the instructor and the student that the student would be awarded an I.

Summary of How Grades Are Weighted

Assignments	Percentage of Grade
Photojournalism Project	25%
Cultural Comparison Reflection	55%
Cultural Comparison Research paper	20%
Overall grade	100%

Assessment Details

The 1-Week Rule:

Any inquiry or dispute over grading must be made within one week after scores are posted. If you fail to protest any score during this time, changes to the score will not be made regardless of reason. No changes may be made to a grade after it has been posted one week.

Photojournalism Project

During each talk, excursion, field visit, or social event students engage in, they should take note of sex education, positive sexuality, LGBTQ* health, or sexual health promotion messages “in the wild” around the Netherlands. Students are expected to take pictures of these “in the wild” messages throughout the two-week abroad program. At the end of the program, students will look through all of their many pictures and choose 10-15 of the most important/influential/ impactful photos they took. Students should add a caption to the photo that indicates why it is a sex education, positive sexuality, or sexual health promotion message and compile these into a Word document to be handed in on Canvas. Additionally, students should contextualize their 10- 15 photos with a description that summarizes how this is all related to the course and the messages delivered in the United States (half-page to one page, single-spaced). All the students’ photojournalism photos will be presented to the rest of the class during our last class period. Since this will be presented to the class, students are encouraged to be creative, and unique, and try not to allow the obvious to be all they include in order to avoid repetition with other students. **This is due June 23, 2025, by 10 a.m. Amsterdam time on Canvas.**

Cultural Comparison Reflection Paper (HSEX 4950 only)

Undergraduate students will be expected to write a reflection paper that is a cultural comparison of sex education, sexual health, or LGBTQ health in the Netherlands to the United

States based on their readings and experiences abroad. This paper should focus on the cultural comparison of something the student is most interested in. The paper must be based on your personal experiences in the Netherlands and research from our course materials. Students are encouraged to utilize the readings and information learned through the course to inform this paper. Maximum 8 pages double-spaced. **Due July 8, 2025, by 11:59 p.m. CST on Canvas.**

Cultural Comparison Research Paper (HSEX 6950 only)

Graduate students will be expected to write a research paper that is a cultural comparison of sex education, sexual health, or LGBTQ health in the Netherlands to the United States. This paper should focus on the cultural comparison of something that the student is most interested in. The paper must be based on research using peer-reviewed journal articles as the source of information. Students are encouraged to utilize the readings and information learned through the course to inform this paper. Additionally, students can integrate up to 20% of personal views, unlike a traditional research paper. This paper should be a maximum of 10 pages double-spaced. **Due July 8, 2025, by 11:59 p.m. CST on Canvas.**

Participation

Success in this course depends heavily on regular participation and engagement. Students will be required to participate actively in discussions and activities in class and during the field excursions.

For full schedule, see calendar in Canvas.

Policies

Attendance Policy

Students are expected to be on time and attend all classes while abroad. Many instructors assess both attendance and participation when assigning a final course grade. Attendance alone does not guarantee a positive participation grade; the student should be prepared for class and engage in class discussion. See the on-site syllabus for specific class requirements.

University of Minnesota Policies & Procedures

Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

Scholastic Dishonesty

Scholastic dishonesty means plagiarizing; cheating on assignments or examinations; engaging in unauthorized collaboration on academic work; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; submitting false or incomplete records of academic achievement; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement; altering forging, or misusing a University academic record; or fabricating or falsifying data, research procedures, or data analysis.

Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to and including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

Student Conduct

The University of Minnesota has specific policies concerning student conduct. This information can be found [on the Learning Abroad Center website](#).