

Literature of Sex Work

ENGL 384-10 Spring 2024

Dr. Draucker



Image descriptions: at the top left is a black-and-white eighteenth-century image of a woman with a flowing dress clutching her necklace. At the top right is a nineteenth-century cartoon titled "The Great Social Evil" that depicts two women talking to each other in an alleyway. On the bottom left is an image from the film "Hustlers" in which characters played by Jennifer Lopez and Constance Wu are looking at each other. On the bottom right is a photograph from a protest for sex worker's rights. (sources: Google Images)

Reading List

Content warning: Many/most of these texts deal with difficult topics such as sexual violence, illness, death, racism, gender discrimination, transphobia, homophobia, and xenophobia. Much of this material can be emotionally and intellectually challenging, even triggering. Please care for yourselves as you engage with this material. If you have concerns about specific texts or topics, please let me know.

Unit 1: What is sex work? Is sex work feminist?

- T 1/16: *In class:* introductions; syllabus; introduce presentation assignment; co-create community guidelines
- Th 1/18: Read Molly Smith and Juno Mac, "Introduction," *Revolting Prostitutes*, pgs. 1-21
AND Smith and Mac, "Sex" (*Revolting Prostitutes* pgs. 22-39)
- T 1/23: Read "Sex work & feminism" packet (on Canvas)-- *longer reading, plan ahead!*

Unit 2: Sex work in the 18th century

- Th 1/25: Daniel Defoe, from *Roxana: The Fortunate Mistress* (1724)
- T 1/30: John Cleland, *Fanny Hill, or Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748)
Frances Burney, *Evelina, or a Young Lady's Entrance into the World* (1778)

Unit 3: Sex work in the 19th century

- Th 2/1: Charles Dickens, from *Oliver Twist* (1841)
Elizabeth Gaskell, from *Mary Barton* (1848)
- T 2/6: Elizabeth Gaskell, "Lizzie Leigh" (1850)
- Th 2/8: Dante Gabriel Rossetti, "Jenny" (1870)
"The Great Social Evil" (1858)
- T 2/13: Augusta Webster, "A Castaway" (1870)
- Th 2/15: Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, letters to the *Daily News* (1869-1870)

Unit 4: Prostitution & race in early-20th-century America

- T 2/27: Claude McKay, "Harlem Shadows" (1922)
Langston Hughes, "Young Prostitute" (1923)
- Th 2/29: Louise Meriwether, from *Daddy Was a Number Runner* (1970)
CW: mention of sexual assault

Unit 5: Sex work in contemporary women's writing

- T 3/5: Melissa Febos, from *Whip Smart* (2010)
- Th 3/7: Tilly Lawless, from *Nothing But My Body* (2021)
CW: brief mentions of suicide pgs. 12, 14, 25; panic attack pg. 23

Unit 6: Sex Work on the Silver Screen: *Hustlers* (2019)

- T 3/12: Watch *Hustlers* (2019), dir. Lorene Scafaria [*available on Hulu & for rent on Google Play, YouTube, Apple TV*]
- Th 3/14: Jacqueline Frances, *Striptastic!* (2017)

Unit 7: Debates about “trafficking” (US context) & decarceral approaches

- T 3/19: Lorelei Lee, “Cash/Consent” (*CW: mentions of rape*)
Zia Moon, “As a Sex Worker with a Chronic Illness, FOSTA Means Losing My Medical Care”
Juno Mac, “The Laws that Sex Workers Really Want” (*FYI this is a TED Talk that pretty much reviews what Mac and Smith argue in Revolting Prostitutes—revisit if you have time*)
*In class: watch excerpts from *Blowin’ Up* (2019), dir. Stephanie Wang Beal*
- Th 3/21: Leigh Goodmark, from *Imperfect Victims* (*cw: mentions of rape*)
Bella Robinson and Katherine Chin, “Decarceral alliances in the fight to decriminalize sex work”

Unit 8: Global sex work and migration

- T 4/2: Smith and Mac, *Revolting*, ch. 3 (“Borders”), pgs. 56-86 (read your hardcopy version)
- Th 4/4: Patricia McCormick, from *Sold* (2006)
[CW: *rape*]
Melissa Gira Grant, “The Saviors” (2014)
- T 4/9: Cassandra Blanchard, “Lonely Men;” Naomi Sayers, “A Memory I Need to Talk About;” Alilí, “When I Crossed the Border;” Pluma Sumaq, “You especially”

Unit 9: Trans sex workers

- T 4/16: Watch *Call Her Ganda* (2018), dir. PJ Raval [*available on Amazon Prime & elsewhere*]
CW: transphobia, violence, murder

Th 4/18: Kai Cheng Thom, from *Fierce Femmes and Notorious Liars* (2019)
In class: watch excerpts from *Tangerine*; *POSE*, s2e4

Unit 10: Male sex workers

T 4/23: Helen Hoang, from *The Kiss Quotient* (2018)
Justin Ducharme, “dream boy” (2019)
In class: watch excerpts from *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande* (2022), dir.
Sophie Hyde

Th 4/25: *Last class!*
Smith and Mac, “Conclusion,” *Revolting Prostitutes*, pgs. 208-220 (read
your hardcopy version)
Melissa Gira Grant, “The Movement” (on Canvas)