

ASH 3931: Global History of Prostitution

Fall 2024

T/R Period 4/4-5 (10:40-11:30 AM /10:40 AM-12:35 PM)

Professor: Dr. Sandy F. Chang (she/her/hers)

Email: sandychang@ufl.edu

Classroom: Keene-Flint 105

Office Hours: Tuesday & Thursday 2-3 PM (Keene-Flint 234) & by appointment



An American GI and sex workers in Calcutta, 1945 (Source: Van Pelt Library, University of Pennsylvania)

Course Description

This course introduces students to prostitution as a complex historical and contemporary phenomenon related to gender, sexuality, labor, law, and migration. The common assumption that prostitution is the “world’s oldest profession” suggests that sex work is both timeless and homogenous. In this course, students will learn to investigate the varied forms of gendered intimacies and economic relations that came to be consolidated under the category of “sex work.” We will examine the myriad ways that sex work was historically situated and experienced, and investigate changing social attitudes, policies, and policy debates towards commercialized sex and sex trafficking. The organization of the course is both thematic and loosely chronological, tracing the period from the eighteenth century to present day. Topics covered include: courtesan culture in early modern Asia; medical interventions into sex work in the nineteenth century; the origins of “white slavery” narratives; the link between militarism and prostitution; colonialism, race, and intimate labor regimes; postwar sex tourism in the global South; and pornography and contemporary debates on the regulation of sex work.

Throughout the course, students will consider pertinent questions that animate debates among historians, policymakers, sex worker activists, and radical feminists. Is prostitution work or sexual violence? Why does terminology (“prostitute” vs. “sex worker”) matter? Who sold sex and why? How have states historically regulated sexual labor? In what ways did gendered norms shape the economics of sex work? How does global inequality in the 21st century shape the sex trade? Questions of consent, coercion, the agency of “victims,” gendered marketplaces, colonial empires, and state policies will animate our class discussions. Through lectures, podcasts, film screenings, and discussions, students will learn to engage more broadly with the history of sex work and the politics of contemporary anti-sex trafficking movements from a global perspective, with a special focus on Asia.

*There are no pre-requisites and no expectation of prior knowledge. Welcome!

Course Objectives

With the successful completion of the course, students will be able to:

1. Identify key terms, policies, and historical changes related to the history of prostitution
2. Articulate the major concepts, themes, as well as historiographical and legal debates about sex work
3. Analyze how the intersection of race, gender, and class have impacted the lives of historical subjects involved in the sex industry
4. Evaluate how urbanization, colonialism, nation-building, wars, migration, globalization, and economic neoliberalism have shaped the social attitudes, policies, and practices of sex work
5. Develop writing and oral communication skills
6. Research and write papers related to sex work that make compelling arguments based on thoughtful engagement with primary and secondary sources

Required Texts and Materials

1. Julia Laite, *The Disappearance of Lydia Harvey: A True Story of Sex, Crime, and the Meaning of Justice* (London: Profile Books, 2022)
2. Gabriele Koch, *Healing Labor: Japanese Sex Work in a Gendered Economy* (Stanford University Press, 2020)

Both books will be available on course reserve at the UF Library West. All additional readings will be posted on Canvas (under Modules section). Class announcements will also be posted online. It will be your responsibility to check the website frequently to make sure you are updated on the course work.

Assignments and Grading

Participation / In-Class Activities (10%) – In order for our class to be successful, your participation during our sessions is crucial. Participation includes regular attendance, informed and thoughtful contributions, and engagement in group work. Students are expected to complete the weekly readings by each Thursday, and come prepared to exchange questions, explanations, and viewpoints about readings and important debates. We will work together to build a classroom environment based on trust and confidentiality, while also fostering rigorous discussions of key

issues. This requires holding space for people's diverse experiences and viewpoints, while engaging each other in respectful and critical debate.

Reading Reflection (20%) – Starting in Week 2, you will write two reading reflection papers (worth 10% each) based on your choice of weekly readings over the course of semester. One reflection must be based on readings between Week 2-8; the other from Week 9-14. The papers must be both descriptive and analytical, succinctly summarizing the selected week's readings and offering insightful observations about the major themes and debates. You should also consider drawing on our lectures and discussions to supplement your analysis. The papers should be double-spaced, 12-point font, 3 pages each. Reading reflections for the previous week must be submitted before the start of Tuesday's class discussion on Canvas.

Op-Ed Essay (15%) – From the perspective of a professional historian, write an op-ed essay that addresses the question: "What's In a Name?: Is it 'prostitution' or 'sex work'?" First, read ["What It Means to Call Prostitution 'Sex Work'"](#) and ["I Am a Sex Worker: Here's Why Calling Me One Matters."](#) Next, craft a nuanced and well-supported argument in response to these two essays, providing specific evidence and case studies. Your piece should refer to at least three authors we have read and discussed this semester to support your claims from a historical perspective. The prose should be clear, accessible, and free of academic jargon. Your op-ed essay should be double-spaced, 12-point font, and 4 pages (700-1000 words). **DUE: Tuesday, 11/7 by 5 PM on Canvas**

Quizzes (15%) – There will be three in-class quizzes (worth 5% each) over the course of the semester. The format will consist of a mixture ID terms and short responses. Questions will be drawn from lectures, discussions, and assigned readings. **DUE: Thursday, 9/12; Thursday, 10/10; Tuesday, 11/19**

Capstone Project (40%) – For your final capstone project, you have two choices:

Supplementary Lecture

Design an additional one-hour lecture that supplements our course "Global History of Prostitution." First, choose a theme to research and consider how it relates to the major issues explored during our semester. Your lecture should clearly state a historical question that your lesson will address, provide case studies that support your arguments, and generate discussion questions based on your selection of assigned readings. It must draw on at least eight sources (a mix of primary and secondary)—which must be approved in advance. You will submit both a written essay of the lecture with PowerPoint presentation that will include a minimum of eight slides. The essay should be 8-10 pages, double-spaced, twelve-point font, and must include a bibliography.

Urban Prostitution in Digital History

Create a digital history project about sex work in a modern city. A list of possible cities will be provided, but students are free to choose their own after consultation with me. Your task is to construct and tell a story of how prostitution evolved in the city over time, dating back to at least the beginning of the twentieth century. Using [Timeline JS](#), your research should include key legislations, reforms, as well as important characters involved in the sex industry (such as abolitionists, regulationists, "pimps"/ "brothel madams," sex workers, and/or activists). You might also consider watershed events or changing conceptions of sex work over time. Your research must draw from at least eight sources (a mix of primary and secondary) – which must be approved in advance. The final

timeline will include a minimum of 10 annotated slides, accompanied by text and/or images and media. We will discuss the various stages of the project in greater detail over the semester. Here are some key components (with more information to follow) and deadlines to keep in mind:

- i) Annotated Bibliography (5%) **DUE: Thursday, 10/24 by 5 PM on Canvas**
- ii) Completed Lecture / Digital Project (20%) **DUE: Tuesday, 12/3 by 5 PM on Canvas**
- iii) Final Reflection (15%) **DUE: Friday, 12/6 by 5 PM on Canvas**

Course Schedule

Note: This schedule represents my current plans and objectives. As we go through the semester, those plans may need to change to enhance the learning objectives. Such changes are not unusual and should be expected.

Week 1 Introduction: Course Overview & Key Concepts

8/22 The World's "Oldest Profession?": Unpacking the History of Sex Work

Required Readings:

1. Chanelle Gallant, "Fuck You, Pay Me: The Pleasures of Sex Work," in adrienne maree brown (ed.), *Pleasure Activism: The Politics of Feeling Good* (Chico: AK Press, 2019), 177-188.
2. Catharine A. MacKinnon, "OnlyFans is Not a Safe Platform for 'Sex Work.' It's a Pimp," *New York Times*, September 6 2021:
<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/06/opinion/onlyfans-sex-work-safety.html>

Week 2 Courtesans and Sexual Politics in Early-Modern Asia

8/27 Discussion

8/29 Learned Women, Talented Artists: Courtesans in Early-Modern China

Required Readings:

1. Read Veena Talwar Oldenburg, "Lifestyle as Resistance: The Case of the Courtesans of Lucknow, India," *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 2 (1990): 259-287.

Week 3 Prostitution and the Market: Capital, Urbanization, and Commercialization of Sex

9/3 Discussion

9/5 "Pleasure Quarters" and Sexual Economy in Tokugawa Japan

Required Readings:

1. Read Ashwini Tambe, "Brothels as Families: Reflections on the History of Bombay's *Kothas*," *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8, no. 2 (2006): 219-242.

2. Katie Hemphill, *Bawdy City: Commercial Sex and Regulation in Baltimore, 1790-1915* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 48-76.
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Week 4 The Brothel as a Liminal Space: Private Acts / Public Spaces

9/10 Discussion
9/12 Film Screening: *Streets of Shame* (1956)

Required Readings:

1. L.K. Bertram, "The Other Little House: The Brothel as a Colonial Institution on the Canadian Prairies, 1880-93," *Journal of Social History* 56, no. 1 (2022): 58-88.

***DUE Thursday, 9/12: In-Class Quiz**

Week 5 Prostitution, Race, and Empire

9/17 Discussion
9/19 From Regulation to Abolition: Vice, Venereal Disease, and Sexual Reform in the British Empire

Required Readings:

1. Begin reading Julia Laite, *The Disappearance of Lydia Harvey*.
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Week 6 New Discourses on Trafficking in an Era of Internationalism

9/24 Discussion
9/26 The Origins and Afterlives of the "White Slavery" Panic

Required Readings:

1. Finish reading Julia Laite, *The Disappearance of Lydia Harvey*.
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Week 7 Brokering Sex Work

10/1 Discussion
10/3 Pimps, Madams, Traffickers, and Middlemen

Required Readings:

1. Elisa Camiscioli, "Coercion and Choice: The 'Traffic in Women' Between France and Argentina in the Early Twentieth Century," *French Historical Studies* 42, no.3 (2019): 483-507.
2. Caroline Sequin, "Marie Piquemal, the 'Colonial Madam': Brothel Prostitution, Migration, and the Making of Whiteness in Interwar Dakar," *Journal of Women's History* 33, no. 4 (2021): 118-141.

Week 8 Prostitution and Identity

10/8 Discussion
10/10 Deviant Sexualities and the Figure of the “Prostitute”

Required Readings:

1. Saidiya Hartman, *Wayward Lives, Beautiful Experiments: Intimate Histories of Social Upheaval* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019): 6-8; 57-86.
2. Vernadette Vicuna Gonzalez, *Empire’s Mistress, Starring Isabel Rosario Cooper* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021): pp.

***DUE Thursday, 10/10: In-Class Quiz**

Week 9 Sex, Work, and Border Control

10/15 Discussion
10/17 Intimate Migrations and the Politics of Exclusion

Required Readings:

1. Nina Vuolajarvi, “Precarious Intimacies: Europeanized Border Regime and Migrant Sex Work,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 45, no. 7 (2019): 1090-1107.
 2. Liat Kozma, “Women’s Migration for Prostitution in Interwar Middle East and North Africa,” *Journal of Women’s History* 28, no. 3 (2016): 93-113.
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Week 10 The Sexual Front

10/22 Discussion
10/24 Transnational Desires Across Borders

Required Readings:

1. Read Yuri Doolan, “Transpacific Camptowns: Korean Women, US Army Bases, and Military Prostitution in America,” *Journal of American Ethnic History* 38, no.4 (2019): 33-54.

***DUE Thursday 10/24: Annotated Bibliography**

Week 11 Postwar Mobilities: Globalization, Travel, and Sex Tourism

10/29 Discussion
10/31 Transnational Desires Across Borders

Required Readings:

1. Gabriele Koch, *Healing Labor: Japanese Sex Work in the Gendered Economy*, pp. 1-98.
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Week 12 Sex Work as Healing Labor

- 11/5 Discussion
11/7 Film Screening: *Good Luck to You, Leo Grande* (2022)

Required Readings:

1. Gabriele Koch, *Healing Labor*, pp. 99-174.

***DUE Thursday, 11/7: Op-Ed Essay**

Week 13 Porn Work

- 11/12 Discussion
11/14 Pornography and Feminist Debates on Work and Authenticity

Required Readings:

1. Heather Berg, "Porn Work, Feminist Critique, and the Market for Authenticity," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 42, no.3 (2017): 669-692.
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Week 14 The "Nordic" Model and the New Trafficking Paradigm

- 11/19 Discussion
11/21 Carceral Feminism and the Rescue Industry

Required Readings:

1. Elizabeth Bernstein, "Militarized Humanitarianism Meets Carceral Feminism: The Politics of Sex, Rights, and Freedom in Contemporary Anti-Trafficking Campaigns," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 36, no. 1 (2001): 45-71.

***DUE Tuesday, 11/19: In-Class Quiz**

Week 15 Thanksgiving Break

- 11/26 *No Class
11/28 *No Class

Required Readings:

None.

Week 16 Looking Forward: New Debates on Sex Work

12/3 Final Reflections

Required Readings:
None.

***DUE Tuesday 12/3: Final Capstone Project**

Course Policies & Resources

Attendance and Participation

Students are expected to attend all sessions and actively participate. The success of our class and fulfillment of your learning objectives depends on your engagement and contribution. If you are sick, do not come to class. You must, however, inform me of your absence. Make-up work will be offered. Frequent absences will result in a low participation grade.

Deadlines

Late assignments will be marked down by a grade fraction for each 24-hour period beyond the due date and time. Assignments that are more than 72 hours late will not be accepted. Exemptions will be allowed for serious illnesses, family emergencies, and university-approved functions, but students must notify me *before* the deadline. In cases of unforeseen emergencies, please get in touch with me as soon as possible after your absence. For more on policies related to make-up exams and assignments, please visit:

<https://catalog.ufl.edu/UGRD/academic-regulations/attendance-policies/>

Communication

I will send important reminders and announcements on Canvas or via email to your UF account. It is your responsibility to check your account regularly to stay up to date. Students are also very welcome to email me at sandychang@ufl.edu. Please note that I will respond to every student's email within 24 hours during weekdays. I do not check emails regularly on weekends (from Friday, 6 PM to Monday, 8 AM), so please plan accordingly.

I highly encourage students to come to my office hours if you have questions.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities

Please do not hesitate to contact the instructor during the semester if you have any individual concerns or issues that need to be discussed. Students requesting classroom accommodation must first register with the Dean of Students Office. The Dean of Students Office will provide documentation to the student who must then provide this documentation to the Instructor when requesting accommodation. Contact the Disability Resources Center for information about available resources for students with disabilities.

<https://disability.ufl.edu>

Course Evaluations

Students are expected to provide professional and respectful feedback on the quality of instruction in this course by completing course evaluations online via GatorEvals. Guidance on how to give

feedback in a professional and respectful manner is available from the [Gatorevals website](#). Students will be notified when the evaluation period opens, and can complete evaluations through the email they receive from GatorEvals, in their Canvas course menu under GatorEvals, or via the [evaluation system](#). Summaries of course evaluation results are available to students at the [public results website](#).

U Matter, We Care

Your well-being during these uncertain times is of utmost importance to the University of Florida. The U Matter, We Care initiative is committed to creating a culture of care on our campus by encouraging members of our community to look out for one another and to reach out for help if a member of our community is in need. If you or a friend is in distress, please contact umatter@ufl.edu so that the U Matter, We Care Team can reach out to the student in distress. A nighttime and weekend crisis counselor is available by phone at 352-392-1575. The U Matter, We Care Team can help connect students to the many other helping resources available including, but not limited to, Victim Advocates, Housing staff, and the Counseling and Wellness Center. In case of emergency, call 9-1-1.

Grading Scale

A	93-100	B-	80-82
A-	90-92	C+	77-79
B+	87-89	C	73-76
B	83-86	C-	70-72
	80-83.2% = B-		60-63.2% = D-
	76.7-79.9% = C+		Below 60 = E