

ANTH 356 | Gender & Sexuality in Modern Greek Culture – Spring 2025

Instructor: Dr. Aimee Placas
Email: aimee.placas@cyathens.org

Course Description

How do social scientists approach the subjects of gender and sexuality?

What can students learn about life in modern Greece when we apply the lens of gender and sexuality to study the society there?

This course combines readings from across the social sciences and first-hand participant-observation research to answer these questions. We'll be discussing gender and sexuality in their intersections in Greece with kinship, religion, economy, national and international politics, technology, medicine, modernity, ethnicity, and more, giving us a particular insight into important aspects of change (and continuity) in this region during the last century. We will be looking at social theory related to gender and sexuality to help us analyze our readings and analyze our own observations.

Students will be also be introduced to the methodologies of ethnographic research, providing you with the tools to enrich your experience in Greece through a sustained, focused, curious, and systematic engagement with the cultures you're immersed in here (and with your own position here as a student/tourist/traveler/foreigner/gendered person). Additionally, in the research assignments, students will be introduced to aspects and spaces of society that they might not otherwise discover on their own.

Course Approach

This course takes a look at modern Greek culture (cultures? let's take apart this word!) through a discussion of gender and sexuality. Most of the readings will be from anthropology, but many of them draw from other social sciences disciplines and cultural studies, and from feminist and queer theory.

We will have three interwoven concerns:

First, the study of gender and sexuality. What exactly do these two words mean, and how can we approach them from an anthropological point of view? We'll be discussing gender and sexuality in their intersections with kinship, religion, economy, national and international politics, technology, medicine, modernity, ethnicity, and more. Thus our focus will give us a particular insight into important aspects of change (and continuity) in Greece during the last century. Our study of critical theory related to gender and sexuality will allow us to understand how gender and sexuality can be studied cross-culturally, as well as understand how feminist and queer theories have developed over time and how they have been engaged with in society outside of academia.

Second, the study of modern Greek culture. Our readings and lectures will survey how gender and sexuality have been studied in Modern Greece by social scientists over the last 60 years, giving us the chance to both analyze the construction of gender and sexuality in Greek society, and to consider how the representations of these subjects by academics, and by the West in general, are linked with representations of Greek and Mediterranean "culture." In this survey, we will cover immigration, urbanization, Europeanization (and other -ations), tourism, and other forces that have affected the meanings of gender and sexuality in Greece. By looking at how gender and sexuality have been studied in Modern Greek society over time, we are able to trace the development of feminist and queer theory and its impact on the production of knowledge, as well as its impact on social change.

Third, ethnographic research. We'll be working to gain an understanding of what ethnography consists of, both as a type of text, and as a way of doing research. Hopefully this will provide you with tools to enrich your experience in Greece through a sustained, focused, curious, and systematic engagement with the cultures you're immersed in here (and with your own position here as student/tourist/traveler/foreigner/gendered person).

Students need to be prepared to do a lot of work: reading and writing, observing and participating. This work is designed to add an additional layer of meaning and experience to your time here in Greece; it will be relevant, and it will be worth it.

Learning Objectives

Content. You will gain an understanding of the cultural changes, and continuities, that have unfolded in Greece over the past 50 years related to gender and sexuality.

Disciplinary. You will understand the theoretical perspectives of anthropology towards studying gender and sexuality and their development over time, as well as see how approaches from disciplines across the social sciences can be combined to create a more holistic understanding of how gender and sexuality are constructed in socially and historically specific ways.

Methodology. You will become familiar with the participant-observation methodologies of ethnography, with a particular attention to the feminist critique of those methodologies, and put them into practice. These research methodologies are relevant not just to anthropologists, but also in sociology, behavioral economics, communications, marketing, and more.

Experiential. As part of the study abroad experience, you will engage with the challenges, possibilities, and problems of studying another culture while in the midst of it, as an interactive participant and researcher in the culture you are immersed in, and as a person with your own positionality that shapes your attention and understandings.

Personal. You will return home with a broader appreciation of the many ways it is possible to be a human being, allowing you a broader world view and an increased sense of empathy towards others.

Course Requirements

Participation: Students are expected to attend class having read the assignment for that day, to have a copy of that assignment with them in class, to participate in the discussion, and to complete any short non-graded observation assignments that we'll be making part of our class discussion, all as part of their participation grade. Absences will affect your grade.

Written work for the course: Students will complete three written assignments over the course of the semester, based on ethnographic research methodologies. A detailed description of all assignments (and additional handouts on methodology) are available on the course's Moodle page. Late work drops 10% in grade for the first day it is late, and 5% more for each day thereafter; if you have a good reason for requesting an extension, you need to let me know before the paper is due. Written assignments must be uploaded on Moodle, and are due at midnight the evening of the due date. If you plan to be traveling that evening, you need to upload it before you go, because internet access is not a constant. The written work assesses the energy students put into doing ethnographic research and their ability to apply the theoretical tools acquired in the class towards analyzing their own research findings; a detailed grading rubric for the assignments is provided on Moodle.

Reading responses: This course has no cumulative final exam. Instead, students will complete reading responses to be submitted online before class, relevant to the readings to be conducted that day. Questions specific to the response will be given for each reading.

Evaluation and Grading

The final grade will be calculated as follows:

Reading responses: 30%

Three assignments: 60%

Participation: 10%

Evaluation Criteria - Course Assignments

Reading responses are evaluated according to the following questions:

Have you understood the reading?

- It should be clear that you've understood the main arguments of the reading, through your summaries in your own words, your ability to apply the concepts/theories to new information, and sufficient detail.

Have you spent time working on your response? (length, complexity)

- If your responses are too short, I'll let you know. It doesn't need to be a long essay, and bullet points are fine, as long as the phrases are long enough for me to understand what you're trying to say.

Does it show creativity and analytical thinking?

- If you're asked for examples, can I tell that you thought it through? (I.e. you haven't repeated things I've said in class, but you've created your own examples).
- Are you making connections to other classes, experiences outside of this class, or other readings?

- Have you offered up critiques of the text (pointing out weaknesses in the arguments, pointing out what you found most interesting/compelling and why, etc), or considered the importance/relevance of the text and its arguments for our class, etc.
- Essentially, what kind of intellectual work have you done besides just summarizing the text?

Written assignments are evaluated according to the following questions:

Your paper should demonstrate the energy you put into collecting data (detailed observations, thoughtful questions and conversations with people, photographs or video if relevant). It should show that you sat down with your collected data, your class notes, and the assignment descriptions and accompanying texts to brainstorm over what you can say towards interpreting and analyzing the data you found, and how to structure that analysis into a paper. At any point if you feel unsure about your arguments or how to continue, do remember that you can use me as a resource, and send me an email or ask to meet with me outside of class.

1. The amount of energy put into investigating your topic.
 - a) Is it clear you put focused energy into observing, demonstrated through descriptive detail?
 - b) Do you make significant connections to issues of gender and/or sexuality in your observations?
 - c) Did you note appropriate detail?
 - d) Have you sought out people to ask questions of, to get information to assist with your observations? If asking questions during the observation wasn't successful or possible, did you brainstorm some questions to pose to some people afterwards in a different context? Do inform people that you're asking for a paper for school.
 - e) If relevant and possible, have you collected visual images to illustrate your points?
2. The amount of thought and time put into your own analysis of the meaning of your findings, and your reflections.
 - a) Did you include your own analysis of your findings?
 - b) Did you use and cite our readings and our class discussions?
 - c) Were you creative and thoughtful? Could I tell that you really brainstormed and thought this through?
 - d) Have you combined both observing and conversations with people towards a greater understanding of the social context you observed?
 - e) Are you self-reflective about your positionality as a researcher and how that shapes your observations and findings?
3. The amount of work put into crafting the paper.
 - a) Is the paper proofread and grammatically correct?
 - b) Is it well-organized, well-written, using language appropriate for an academic paper?
 - c) Are your references correctly cited (when you have the means to do so)? In other words, if you mention a reading, insert (Author Year) at the end of the sentence, or even better (Author Year; page #). If you use another citation format, that's fine, as long as you're consistent through the paper.

CYA Regulations and Accommodations

Attendance Policy

CYA regards attendance in class and on-site (in Athens or during field study trips) as essential. If a class is missed for this course, you are expected to make up the work, and to be in touch with the professor regarding how to do so. Absences are recorded and have consequences.

Policy on Original Work

Unless otherwise specified, all submitted work must be your own original work. Any ideas taken from the work of others must be clearly identified as quotations, paraphrases, summaries, figures etc., and accurate internal citations and/or captions (for visuals) as well as an accompanying bibliography must be provided. Use of assistive technologies like A.I. are not permitted for writing assignments or reading response summaries.

Use of Laptops

In-class or onsite use of laptops and other devices is permitted if this facilitates course-related activities such as note-taking, looking up references, etc. Laptop or other device privileges will be suspended if devices are not used for class-related work.

Class Schedule

You will find the weekly schedule [at this link](#). The schedule of readings and topics is flexible and likely to change (in

agreement with both professor and students) based on student interests and any significant current events that unfold during the term.

Course Bibliography

You'll find the course bibliography [at this link](#), and is updated continuously as new articles are published. Course readings are drawn from this bibliography. Students taking the course at the 400 level will be assigned additional readings from this bibliography. Unassigned readings can be utilized for the annotated bibliography assignment.