Evaluation guidelines for Current Events Discussion (2 parts)

This assignment is based on reflection, learning, being able to effectively communicate information to others, and also emphasizes the importance of using reputable research-based information to substantiate your learning. For the initial discussion post, students are expected to post thoughtful/reflective information and a discussion question on a current event topic of their choice. The discussion responses, which are due the following week, should be thoughtful/reflective replies to 2 discussion questions posted by your classmates. Review Section V, part e of your syllabus for further information about expectations for out-of-class assignments.

IMPORTANT: As with other assignments, I suggest that you first type and save all of your posts into a Word document. This will be helpful if there is a problem with Blackboard. In the past, students have experienced problems with being timed out while writing discussion posts. Saving your posts in a Word document helps you avoid having to retype an entire post. DO NOT post anything as an attachment. Post directly into the submissions area.

1. **Initial post (up to 20 points):** Post a 400-600 word reflection/informed opinion concerning any human sexuality-related topic that has been in the news within the last 2 years. *In your post, you should include the link to the news source, provide a brief summary of the article and follow with your critical interpretation of the information. At the end of your post, you must ask one critical thinking question for your peers to answer.* Two samples of well-written posts with citations are provided below. You should integrate 1-3 sources (not counting the link to your news article) to substantiate your interpretation, with at least one being a peer-reviewed journal article. A primary objective is for you to practice checking the credibility of your sources to determine if the information is considered a reputable source by experts in the field. In the subject line, clearly label your post with the topic you are discussing or in a way that will peak the interest of others and make them want to read your post.

**Some suggestions to help you choose a topic include:**

Focus on something you think is interesting, thought-provoking, or demands attention when it comes to sexuality.

Think broadly – consider our discussions of all the different areas that relate to sexuality.

If you are using a topic that may not seem directly related to sexuality, but you feel it is, make sure to provide a clear justification of the connection you are making to how it relates to sexuality.

To find news articles, you can just browse any local, national, or global news site, or you can Google “[insert name of a sexuality related topic] in the news.”

You can also check out the extra credit blogs area as several students have written blogs about current events topics on there. You might read something that sparks you interest to learn more about.

**\*\*NOTE: THE DISCUSSION POSTS ARE NOT JUST BASED ON YOUR OPINION. You need to substantiate your viewpoints with relevant citations from reputable sources. Make sure to clearly justify what makes your source reputable.**

1. **Respond to at least 2 classmates’ initial posts (up to 15 points)**

Respond to at least two classmates’ initial posts. You need to respond by answering the discussion question they posed at the end of their initial post. It is expected that you will respond with more than “I agree” or “I disagree.” Response ideas: ask the writer thought provoking questions about their post; ask them to clarify something about their post; provide information from a different perspective that challenges their position; provide them with a scenario that could be applied to their position and ask if they would still hold to their original position. Make sure to provide evidence that you are utilizing critical thinking by referring to one or more of the concepts from the critical consciousness handout. This should be specific. When I am reading your responses, I should be able to clearly tell that you are practicing a specific skill from the handout. Pull in outside information as needed to support your stance. Make sure it is information from a reputable source. Clearly identify what makes it reputable.

\*\*Each student must *interact respectfully with all others*. Remember to uphold the ISU Code of Computer Ethics and Acceptable Use at all times. This information can be obtained from: <http://policy.iastate.edu/policy/it/ethics/#1>.

How to post your initial response (DO NOT CREATE A NEW FORUM):

1.  Click on “Current Events Discussion.”

2. Click “create thread.”

3. Type your post into a WORD DOCUMENT to ensure proper spelling and grammar.

4. Copy and paste your post into the word box.

5. Title your post with a brief description of your topic.

6. Click “Submit.”

How to reply to a classmate:

1. Click on a classmate’s discussion post.

2. Click on “reply.”

3. Type your response in a WORD DOCUMENT to ensure proper spelling and grammar.

4. Copy and paste your post into the word box.

5. Click “Submit.”

**Criteria considered for evaluation of initial post:**

18-20pts You chose a very interesting topic, and did a great job demonstrating how it connects to our study of human sexuality. Your initial discussion demonstrates investigation of the topic beyond own opinion; gives examples and specific details to back up what is being said, including citing reputable sources; shows critical thinking related to the topic either by showing an understanding of more than one side of the issue. Not only did you ask challenging questions about the topic and/or helping the reader understand the process the writer went through to come to his or her conclusion, there was also thought-provoking question written to generate further discussion about the topic.

16-17pts You chose a very interesting topic, and have demonstrated how it connects to our study of human sexuality. However, your initial discussion post shows minimal demonstration of critical thinking; lacks examples and/or detail in some areas. factually correct with a few grammar/spelling errors; includes reference to outside sources; however, they are not fully cited.

13-15pts While you did address a topic relevant to our study of human sexuality, just summarizing basic information about the topic was not the point of the assignment. You needed to demonstrate critical thinking and include examples/ details to support your discussion. For future references please utilize your critical conscious handout.

without adding anything unique to the discussion; lacks examples and/or detail; does not extend discussion beyond the surface of the topic by asking challenging questions or showing critical thinking. Factually correct but incomplete main points or thoughts; some grammar/spelling errors; cites source(s), however, credibility of source is questionable.

12 or less The lowest scores would be given if the writer basically just took the time to write a very brief post without showing any critical thinking, examples or detail and does not add anything to the discussion beyond repeating what has already been said. Low scores will also be given if information is off-topic, incorrect, or irrelevant to discussion; disorganized or inappropriate content with multiple grammar/spelling errors; if no source is cited, no more than 5 points will be given.

**Criteria considered for evaluation of discussion responses:**

14-15pts Responds to posts from 2 classmates; answers each discussion question fully; adds something unique to the discussion; gives examples and specific details to back up what is being said; shows critical thinking related to the topic by directly addressing one or more concepts as outlined in the critical consciousness handout; includes outside sources if relevant to demonstrate effort to substantiate main points

12-13pts Responds to posts from 2 classmates; although you do address each discussion question; there needs to be more than just summarizing what the post was about. There needs to be something added that is unique to the discussion. There is a lack of examples and/or detail in some areas that could strengthen writer’s main points. may contain a some spelling/grammar errors

10-11pts Either responds to posts from 2 classmates but lacks evidence of critical thinking within each and lacks details and specific examples to back up writer’s main points; responses add minimal to the discussion (e.g., agrees or disagrees); or offers full response for only 1 of the 2 required; does not extend discussion beyond the surface of the topic by asking challenging questions or showing critical thinking to enrich discussion; may contain substantial spelling/grammar errors

9 or less The lowest scores would be given if the writer basically just took the time to write two to three sentences without showing any critical thinking, examples or detail and does not add anything to the discussion beyond repeating what has already been said. Low scores will also be given if information is off-topic, incorrect, or irrelevant to discussion; disorganized or inappropriate content with multiple grammar/spelling errors

\*\*\*\*EXEMPLARY FIRST POST/ANSWER (18-20 points)\*\*\*\*

[ABC News: ‘Friends with Benefits:’ Fun on the Big Screen, Not So Much in Real Life:](http://abcnews.go.com/Entertainment/friends-benefits-bad-mila-kunis-timberlake/story?id=14107443) This article references the 2011 film “Friends with Benefits” (FWB) featuring Mila Kunis and Justin Timberlake. The article basically addresses anecdotal stories shared by 5 different people of FWB relationships gone awry. Knowing that many of my friends have been involved in FWB relationships, I was curious if there is research being done on this topic and if so, what are the findings. Today many people have different views on the link between love and sex, in particular which should come first. Should you be in a loving and consenting relationship with someone before you choose to engage in sexual behavior with him or her, or should you have sex with them to see if you could potentially have a loving relationship?  I never considered these two options until I overheard two people on campus talking about how one of them wants to have sex with their “friend” to see if they could have a potential relationship out of it. To me this concept is absolutely ridiculous. I believe that two people should be at a certain trust level and security with each other before they choose to have sex. I feel that movies like the one above seem to promote a false impression of how FWB relationships are likely to turn out.

 Friends-with-benefits is a very controversial topic. I suspect that for many people in these relationships the guidelines made at the beginning tend to change or break as this casual encounter turns into a relationship. This may happen to either one person or this may happen to both of the partners. According to Hughes, Morrison & Asada (2005), 54% of their sample from two colleges has had sex with a friend at least one time. This article also discusses that to maintain such a relationship it is very important to understand each other’s attitudes towards love. If one person considers sex is a way of “making love,” then he or she is more likely to fall in love with their partner. Given this information, I believe it is very important to communicate properly and stick to the guidelines agreed upon if you are going to engage in a friend with benefits relationship. For example, if you agree to only do certain sexual behaviors, you shouldn’t do more without having a conversation about it first. Or if you agree to not ask questions about each other’s sex lives outside of your relationship, then that should be followed. According to an essay on Kinsey Confidential, a friend with benefits relationship can be unrealistic. As the article says, we are not robots. We have feelings and sex is one of those things that make us feel love and have a connection to another. After sex your body releases a mixture of hormones that make you feel attachment and love for that person. It tricks your brain into feeling something that you may not want to feel, but it is hard to distinguish which ones are actual feelings and what feelings are caused by those hormones. For that reason also, I do not think friends with benefits relationships are a good idea.

Discussion question: *In today’s world, casual “hook-ups” are more common practice and they create new “rules” for relationship practices. Imagine a friend is asking you for advice about whether or not they should “hook up” with someone they consider to be one of their really good friends. What do you think?*

Sources:

Hughes, M., Morrison, K., & Asada, K. J. (2005). *What’s love got to do with it? Exploring the impact of maintenance rules, love attitudes, and network support on friends with benefits relationships.* Western Journal of Communication, 69:1, 49-66.

Essay from Kinsey Confidential: <http://kinseyconfidential.org/friends-benefits-ideal-reality/>

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\*\*\*\*EXEMPLARY FIRST POST/ANSWER [18-20 points]\*\*\*\* [Used with permission from student]

After running across an article titled, [Couples Porn Can Rev Up Your Sex Life](http://www.everydayhealth.com/sexual-health/couples-porn.aspx) by Dennis Thompson Jr. I began to question if being able to define pornography as either good or bad is really that simple. For example, in this article, Thompson contends pornography can be used as a form of couple’s therapy. He believes that men are more often turned on or aroused by visuals like sex videos, while women respond more through verbal methods, i.e. speaking, romantic novels or magazines. Many methods can be used, a few that Thompson touches on are “Watching the entire sexual video before engaging in sex,” or “trying out a position seen in a magazine.”

Unfortunately in society it seems more and more that pornography is viewed as dirty, taboo, and generally not talked about. I’m going to go a bit out there and walk a fine line proposing that pornography isn’t that bad, and that it can be beneficial. It is estimated there are 4.2 million pornographic websites, occupying just over 12% of the internet. Of these websites 42.7% of internet users view them regularly, and 1/3 of the users are female (Internet Pornography Statistics). So are just about half the internet users in the world negatively affected by pornography? I would argue no, and the article above supported some of the reasons why I believe this. But I decided to take a peek at what some current research says.

In the article, “Sexual media use and relationship satisfaction,” (2011) the authors completed a study with 217 heterosexual couples measuring factors such as how much sexual media was used by each person and what level of overall relationship satisfaction along with level of sexual satisfaction they reported. I found it interesting that the authors refer to the use of pornography as sexual media. It made me wonder if people’s reactions would be different based on this. To me calling it sexual media as opposed to pornography seems to take the “sting” out and perhaps result in fewer judgments.

After reviewing the results, it did support my belief that pornography may not be such a black and white issue. In the study there were different findings based on gender and whether the videos were watched alone or together. For example, higher levels of watching together as opposed to watching alone were related to reports of higher relational satisfaction. A finding I found interesting was when men reported higher levels of sexual media use, they tended to report more negative levels of satisfaction; however, when the woman in the relationship reported higher use of sexual media, the man’s report of positive satisfaction increased. That could partially be explained by the finding that more men reported using sexual media for masturbation, while women were more likely to report using it as part of the sexual interaction with the male partner.

Finally another reason why I think pornography is difficult to judge: “The correlation is inverse: the more pornography, the less rape. It is like the inverse correlation: the more police officers on the street, the less crime” (D’Amato). Since the 1970’s the availability of pornography in the United States has changed. At this time video tapes were the distribution media. In the 1980’s came an even bigger change; the internet. Those video tapes conveniently moved to your laptop, this lead to a nationwide trend downward in sexual assault cases and rape. Since 1973 rape related crimes in the U.S. have fallen by about 85%. Some would say this could be due to education of women to be safer, or the “no means no” stigma. This coincidence however seems too convenient. Pornography is a massive industry in our generation. Instead of restricting the adult industry even more, keeping it progressing is giving human beings an outlet to increase relationship satisfaction, satisfy fantasies, and release aggression.

Discussion question for peers: What do you think of Internet Pornography, or pornography of any kind for that matter? Do you think it is beneficial or destructive to society, is it an issue you are comfortable or uncomfortable talking about? Why do you think it is still such a taboo subject in society today?

1. D'Amato, Anthony. "Internet Porn Shown to Decrease Incidence of Rape.." 2008: n. pag. Web. 14 Nov 2010. <[http://www.impactlab.net/2008/01/06/internet-porn-shown-to-decrease-incidence-of-rape/](https://exchange.iastate.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=7MJRNGedlkWqfQqc71KwGQlKaC2b5s8I7AXAztDiw7qjKFmiWuE5BGGKB37GpZms5oggrHUdRSA.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.impactlab.net%2f2008%2f01%2f06%2finternet-porn-shown-to-decrease-incidence-of-rape%2f)>.
2. "Internet Pornography Statistics." *Top Ten Reviews* Jan 2008: n. pag. Web. 16 Nov 2010. <[http://internet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com/internet-pornography-statistics-pg4.html](https://exchange.iastate.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=7MJRNGedlkWqfQqc71KwGQlKaC2b5s8I7AXAztDiw7qjKFmiWuE5BGGKB37GpZms5oggrHUdRSA.&URL=http%3a%2f%2finternet-filter-review.toptenreviews.com%2finternet-pornography-statistics-pg4.html)>.
3. Thompson Jr., Dennis. "Couples Porn Can Rev Up Your Sex Life." n. pag. Web. 10 Nov 2010. <[http://www.everydayhealth.com/sexual-health/couples-porn.aspx](https://exchange.iastate.edu/owa/redir.aspx?C=7MJRNGedlkWqfQqc71KwGQlKaC2b5s8I7AXAztDiw7qjKFmiWuE5BGGKB37GpZms5oggrHUdRSA.&URL=http%3a%2f%2fwww.everydayhealth.com%2fsexual-health%2fcouples-porn.aspx)>.
4. Bridges, A. J., & Morokoff, P. J. (2011). Sexual media use and relational satisfaction in heterosexual couples, *Personal Relationships,* 18(4), 562-585. <<http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1475-6811.2010.01328.x/full>>

After talking with a couple friends that attend the University of Iowa, I immediately knew what I would be writing about for this assignment. They had informed me on a dilemma going on recently that would not only be an opportunity to bash on Iowa, but has such an interesting news headline to go along with it; [Univ. of Iowa TA sends students porn selfie instead of classwork](http://fox4kc.com/2013/10/23/univ-of-iowa-ta-sends-students-porn-selfie-instead-of-classwork/).

I’ve heard a lot about this so called “thinking-off” idea in television lately. It’s defined by thinking yourself into an orgasm. I researched this topic and found an article called *Can you think yourself to orgasm? Yes, yes, YES says sex coach who claims breathing and clenching can give an 'ecstatic experience’.* In this article a sex couch named Barbara Carrellas claims that she can teach people to have a full body orgasm by lying on the floor and doing breathing exercises, while clenching their muscles. The article also includes a woman named Tracy who tries the session with Barbara and admits she had a ‘deeply in-body experience’ but was unsure if it was cased by sexual arousal or hyperventilation. According to an article called Journal of Alternative and Complementary Medicine, hyperventilation can lead to an altered state of consciousness that causes this orgasmic feeling, but there is not any conclusive scientific research of this orgasm therapy. My personal feeling on this idea is that it is very possible to experience a euphoric feeling caused by breathing exercises. It also pretty common knowledge that it is harder for a women to reach orgasm that a man, I’m wondering if by possibly practicing these breathing exercises if a women would have a better or easier chance of reaching orgasm.

I also watched a segment on a television show on TLC called *Strange Sex,* which discussed the idea of thinking off. In the episode a sex coach, who is in fact Barbara Carrellas, holds a session with several people, teaching them how to think off. It seemed as though each an every one of her clients did indeed achieve orgasm. They were flailing their arms, and moaning with pleasure. When the clients were interviewed they claimed they experienced a full body orgasm and are a new advocate of thinking off.

Of course, the majority of society when seeing someone think off would perceive this act as very strange, because it is not perceived as “normal”. In the news article Barbara wishes people would stop thinking of orgasms as only stimulated by the genitals, as well as people having more of an open mind of sex. I’m a major believer in not judging someone for something they enjoy, I’m not concerned with evaluating how other people live their lives.

One thing I think needs to be further researched is if these breathing techniques can be used to help women who are unable to get orgasms, experience them. My discussion question is: Do you believe it is possible to achieve orgasms without genital stimulation?