

TAKE HOME FINAL ESSAY QUESTIONS

Answer **FIVE (5)** of the following questions. Everyone **MUST** answer the first three questions (#1, 2, & 3). Answers must be typed and turned in no later than 5 p.m. on THURSDAY, March 19th.

1. Considerable attention has been given by researchers on the evolution of human sexuality with particular emphasis on the variable role of males and females in the process. In particular, Donald Symons (a socio-biologist) and Sarah Hrdy along with other feminist anthropologists offer two contrasting views of the role of female primate sexuality in seeking to explain the primate emphasis upon non-reproductive sexuality. These two contrasting views go hand in hand with the various theoretical orientations that emphasize the essentialist versus the constructionist view of gender and sexualities. Briefly describe the major characteristics of the different positions taken (socio-biological/essentialist versus cultural constructionist) based upon the readings and class discussion. If we put these two theoretical orientations on a continuum from biologically determined on one end and cultural determined on the other end, where would you place yourself? Which perspective do you think is best and why?
2. Because of your expertise after doing so well in this class, you have been asked to give a lecture on the variable nature of sexualities cross-culturally to a local community group. They have asked you to discuss several issues based on your anthropological knowledge of gender and sexualities: (1) Why is the study of human sexual behavior important? (2) What are the major problems faced by researchers in carrying out research on sexual behavior, particularly cross-culturally? (3) What are some of the ethical dilemmas we face when dealing with the discussion of sexualities from a global perspective? What do you tell them?
3. You have been selected to serve on a panel on "The Cultural Construction of Gender" at a Human Sexuality Conference at CSUB along with Blackwood, Bolin, Cromwell, Herdt, and Nanda. Your role is to summarize the major points each makes regarding this issue. More specifically you are asked to delineate what you perceive to be the major defining characteristics of gender found cross-culturally as well as how concepts of gender (including transgendered identities) relate to sexual expression/behavior. What do you tell the audience?
4. Again, because of your expertise, you have been invited to participate in a panel discussion of incest and the nature of the incest taboo to be held as part of the Human Sexuality Conference at CSUB. Yehudi Cohen and Anne Bolin were both invited but could not attend; you have been asked to speak in their place. What do you tell them?
5. Compare and contrast (similarities and differences) the major aspects of sexual behavior (re: the three key factors discussed) in any TWO societies of your own choosing. What new insights into understanding the interplay of gender and sexualities have you gained from looking at sexual behavior in cross-cultural perspective?

6. Blackwood in LaFont states that: “gendered ideologies are critical to the production of men’s and women’s sexualities”. Citing evidence from selected readings (including Bolin & Whelahan, LaFont and Davies) discuss what she means by this, specifically as it relates to concepts of homosexuality and bisexuality. Based on the readings, class discussion, and your own experience, how do you view homosexual and bisexual relations? How should these concepts be evaluated in comparison to other forms of sexual variation?
7. Because of your extensive knowledge about patterns of human sexuality cross-culturally, you have been asked to give a presentation to a group of college students on the prevalence, characteristics, and best means for reducing one's risk for contracting the HIV virus. What do you tell them?
8. The study of other cultures through anthropology has been described as similar to holding up a mirror to obtain a view of oneself inaccessible by any other means. One might argue that this is particularly relevant given our focus on the variable expressions of sexualities and gender that we have discussed this quarter. Based on all of the material we have discussed this quarter regarding the variable nature of gender and sexual expression, what do you perceive to be the most important insights that you have gained? Has your perception of your own gender and sexuality as framed within the context of American/Western culture changed? If so, how? If not, why? If you did not find anything particularly insightful, indicate why the study of sexual behavior in cross-cultural perspective appears irrelevant to you.