

## Reading Guide Week 3

### Before the Modern Era: Race, Reproduction, Love, and Intimacy

Human life and experience were shaped by sex, sexuality, and gender long before the modern era. Though our course focuses on the modern period (beginning around 1900), it is useful to learn about what came before -- to consider how the ideas and experiences of early Americans differed from, informed, and helped shape modern understandings of sexual and gender identities.

The readings for this week cover roughly 300 years of history. As this is much too long a period to cover with any depth during a single class period, we will focus our energies on specific themes historians identify as particularly important to the history of gender and sexuality in early America: the bounded nature of sex and reproduction during the colonial era; the connections forged between race, slavery, and sexual coercion in antebellum America; and the blurring of lines distinguishing friendship, love, and intimacy in the Victorian era.

#### Required Texts

- John D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman, “The Reproductive Matrix, 1600-1800” in *Intimate Matters*, Third Ed. (2012) 3-52.
- Stephanie McCurry, “Reconstructing Belonging: The Thirteenth Amendment at Work in the World,” in *Intimate States: Gender, Sexuality, and Governance in Modern US History*, eds. Canaday, Cott, and Self (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2021) 19-40.
- Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, “The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between Women in Nineteenth-Century America,” *Signs* 1, no. 2 (Autumn 1975) 1-29.
- “Harriet Jacobs Relates Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, 1861,” in *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*, Peiss, ed. (2002) 147-152.
- “Baron Lahontan Describes Love and Marriage Among the Hurons, 1703,” in *Major Problems in the History of American Sexuality*, Peiss, ed. (2002) 27-31.
- “John Lawson on Native American Women, North Carolina, 1709,” in *Documenting Intimate Matters: Primary Sources for a History of Sexuality in America*, Foster ed. (2012) 14-18.
- “[Two-Spirit](#),” *Wisconsin Pride*, PBS, June 1, 2023, 3m41s.

#### Questions to Consider

Jon D’Emilio and Estelle Freedman’s groundbreaking 1988 book, *Intimate Matters*, was the first to cover the entire history of sexuality in America in a single study. This week you read the first section of the book, which covers the 1600-1800 period. What major themes jump out at you as important structuring elements for American thinking about sex and sexuality during this period? Which historical groups or actors do D’Emilio and Freedman think are especially important? Read the Lahontan and Lawson primary documents alongside D’Emilio and Freedman. Watch the short “Two-Spirit” documentary and compare it the Lawson and Lahontan.

Stephanie McCurry is a professor of history at Columbia University who specializes in the American Civil War and Reconstruction. What can her study of the Thirteenth Amendment – and emancipation – tell us about family, intimacy, and sexual coercion under slavery? What actions did formerly enslaved people take to reconstruct families after Emancipation? What barriers did they face? Read the Jacobs primary source alongside McCurry.

Carroll Smith-Rosenberg’s “Female World of Love and Ritual” is a classic text in women’s history and the history of gender and sexuality. How, according to Smith-Rosenberg, did the gendered ideology of the nineteenth century shape (some, middle-class, white) women’s relationships with other women? How do ideas about privacy and publicity fit into her story? As you read, keep in mind our conversation from week one. This essay was written in 1975... what kinds of social/cultural/political interventions might Smith-Rosenberg have hoped to make in conducting a study of this nature?

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