

THE CENTER FOR
ETHICS & EDUCATION

The Ethics of Sexual Citizenship

TEACHING GUIDE

USING THIS TEACHING GUIDE

The Center for Ethics & Education created this curriculum plan to give faculty and students the tools to bridge philosophy and education.

This study guide is intended for use in undergraduate and graduate education classes. The curriculum offers two plans: a one-week plan and a two-week plan, each with suggested guiding questions, activities, and assignments. We assume two class meetings in one week, but you can combine activities in whatever way works best for your class.

Student materials are available to download and print on our website.

More teaching resources about *Sexual Citizens* are available at <https://www.sexualcitizens.com/discussionresources>

AUDIO

In December 2020 we interviewed Jennifer S. Hirsch and Shamus Khan about the book, *Sexual Citizens: Sex, Power, and Assault on Campus*. Maddy Brighthouse Glueck and Grace Gecewicz spoke with Jennifer and Shamus about sex education, ethical sex, and their ethnographic work on sexual citizenship and sexual assault on college campuses.

LISTEN

<http://ethicsandeducation.wceruw.org/curriculum.html>

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About the Center for Ethics & Education

WEEK ONE LESSON PLAN

Topic: Analyzing the necessary and sufficient conditions for ethical sex.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to understand the meaning of necessary and sufficient conditions and how they relate to ethical sex.
- Students will be able to develop opinions on the necessary conditions for ethical sex.
- Students will be able to disrupt and expand upon preconceived notions of what ethical sex might look like.

Readings:

Hirsch, Jennifer S., and Shamus Khan. *Sexual Citizens: Sex, Power, and Assault on Campus*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020.

- Introduction (p. x-xxxiv)
- Chapter 4: "What is sex for?" (p. 86-112)
- Chapter 1: "Sexual Citizens" (p. 21-23, 80-85)
- Chapter 5: "Consent" (p. 113-145)

Overview:

Day One:

- Survey (before class)
- Conceptual Analysis
- Case Studies

Day Two:

- Reader's Theater and Discussion

Week One Lesson Plan

Day One

Before Class

Survey: Send the survey link to your students and have them complete the survey before class.

In Class

1. **Share out.** At the start of class, ask every student to say one thing that was interesting to them about the book. Work through the conceptual analysis handout (p. 3 in Student Materials packet).
2. **Discuss.** Divide students into groups to discuss the case studies and the results of the survey.

Note: *Sexual Citizens* frequently uses the terms ‘consent,’ ‘casual sex,’ and ‘hookup.’ We have found that while these terms might have seemingly obvious definitions to individual students, the definitions of these terms from one student to the next are likely to be very different. While it is not necessary for every student to have the same understanding of consent, casual sex, and hookups when discussing this book, it is important for all students to understand their peers have different definitions of these terms than themselves.

3. Case Studies: Small Group Discussion

This activity is to disrupt the way students think they view consent by displaying to them how they actually view consent. For example, if someone selects ‘being sober’ as a criterion for ethical sex, and they are presented with a case study where two people in a healthy, long-term relationship have sex while inebriated, they might be more hesitant to label that encounter unethical than a casual hookup between strangers. In other words, a student might re-evaluate their understanding of the role sobriety plays in a hookup compared to a committed relationship.

Conversely, a student might not have indicated in the survey that there needs to be a mutual understanding of an ‘explicit acknowledgement of similar expectations of the relationship,’ yet they might be upset when a man and a woman hook up and the man never communicates with her post-hookup.

The following cases are meant to challenge thinking around students’ views of ethical sex. Students should read through the following cases. In small groups, students discuss which cases they think should be considered ‘ethical sex’ and which shouldn’t be.

ACTIVITY

Case Studies

Case Studies (adapted from Sexual Citizens)

1) Lily and James

Lily and James have been dating for 3 years in college and have been having sex since their second date. One night, they both go out to a bar and get drunk. When they get back to Lily's apartment, they both ask each other if they want to have sex, and they both say 'yes.'

Note: This is meant to disrupt a student's answer to 'being sober' as a criterion for having ethical sex. Students might be less likely to say this is assault because Lily and James are in a long-term relationship.

2) Matthew and John

Matthew has sex with John. They both give verbal consent to each other. The next day Matthew's dog passes away, and he calls John because he wants to talk about how sad he is. John says he does not want to talk about Matthew's emotions and that they were 'just having sex.' Matthew is hurt.

Note: This is meant to make students consider if you need to have an explicit acknowledgment of similar expectations of the relationship in order to have ethical sex.

3) Allison and Brandon

Allison is 50 and Brandon is a 23-year-old college student. Allison asks Brandon (who is sober) if he wants to have sex. Brandon verbally consents by saying 'yes.'

Note: Have students consider what would happen if the gender roles were reversed in this situation. This is meant to make students consider the impact that age (and gender) has on ethical sex. Does it matter?

4) Hannah and Mark

Hannah (a heterosexual woman) and Mark (a heterosexual man) are at a bar. Hannah (for no particular reason) has not had any alcohol. Mark is drunk. Mark asks Hannah if she wants to come back to his apartment and Hannah says, 'yes.' While in Mark's apartment, the two of them start kissing. Mark (who is still drunk) asks if Hannah (who is still sober) if she wants to have sex. Hannah gives a verbal 'yes.' They have sex.

Note: There are many students who likely think if a woman is drunk, a sober man should not have sex with her because that would be 'taking advantage.' This is intended to make students consider the reverse of that situation.

ACTIVITY

Survey

Eliciting a baseline from students is a useful way to start a deeper understanding of necessary and sufficient conditions.

We have created an introductory lesson to Sexual Citizens that aims to:

- Introduce students to their own definitions of ethical sex using a Google Survey
- Introduce them to the conceptual analysis worksheet which is designed to help them think through possible conditions that need to be met to have ethical sex
- Disrupt their definition of ethical sex by presenting case studies that might challenge their previous definition

Creating the survey using Google Forms:

1. Click here for the Google Forms survey template:

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1NW0c0EcrMFmhfNOoYUKNDKqa0gBh9EljKKbX0zRY2k/copy>

2. Click “make a copy” to add to your Drive.

3. Before class, share the link with your students so they can complete the survey before class. The survey results will be depersonalized, but you may be able to see how individual students responded.

4. Students select any/all of the options that they believe contributes to ethical sex. Students are asked to check boxes instead of giving an open ended response so that it is easy to compare student answers once they have completed the survey. The Google Form lists the following options, but you may edit or add to it:

- Being sober
- Explicit verbal consent
- Acknowledgment of similar expectations of the relationship
- Similar ages
- Being in love
- Being married
- Being in a long-term relationship
- Similar expectations regarding contraception
- Honesty

The other two questions are open-ended: Define ‘casual sex’ or ‘hookup’ and define ‘consent.’

5. In class, display the results. Students will likely have checked different boxes.

Week One Lesson Plan

Day Two

Reader's Theater

Whole Class Activity

This lesson plan includes a Readers Theater, an interactive way for students to engage with different perspectives about a particular topic. Assign five students to characters and have them “perform” the Readers Theater by reading it aloud in class. (Alternatively, assign students to do the readers theater in small groups of five.)

Distribute the Reader's Theater (study guide p. 6-8 in Student Materials packet).

Small Group Discussion

Have students break into groups and respond to these discussion questions.

- Do you think consent is sufficient for ethical sex? If not, which of the above necessary conditions are the most plausible?
- Are there any other conditions not mentioned that you think are needed for ethical sex?
- Do you need to be sober in order to have ethical sex? Does that change in a long-term monogamous relationship?
- Do you think that age needs to be considered to have ethical sex? How do you feel about a freshman and a senior? A 17-year-old and an 18-year-old? A 50-year-old and a 40-year-old? An 18-year-old and a 40-year-old?

Context

A university is trying to establish a new sexual education program for their incoming first-year students. They are struggling with what they should tell the first-years about what it means to have ethical sex. They gather five students in a room to debate what is needed for ethical sex. Here is an excerpt from their discussion.

Reader's Theater

Character 2: Well, I'll start off. You obviously need to be married to have ethical sex.

Character 3: ***Rolls eyes*** That's a bad take.

Character 2: Hear me out, everyone is so objectified these days. We objectify people on social media all the time, boosting their appearance with likes and hearts and fire emojis. If you aren't married and you have sex with someone, you are just using them for their body and reducing them to an object of sexual desire. We should treat people as human beings deserving of the utmost respect and dignity, people with their own passions and desires and the only way to ethically bring those characteristics out in sexual relationships is through marriage.

Character 3: Whoa whoa whoa, I get what you're saying, and I agree that often people are used for their bodies in sex, but I don't think that marriage is the only way to prevent this from happening.

Character 2: Okay, how else would you prevent this?

Character 3: I understand that marriage reduces the objectification of people during sex, but I also think that people who have been in a long-term relationship are not merely using one another as objects of desire.

Character 2: For someone who said I had a bad take, you seem to almost agree with me. You think that people should be involved in committed, long-term, monogamous relationships in order to have ethical sex, and not merely use one another for physical bodies.

Character 3: Well no, I just wanted to point out that declaring all sex outside of marriage as unethical seems rather extreme. While I agree that objectification is reduced in marriage and long-term monogamous relationships, as long as there is a mutual understanding of the relationship people can engage in ethical sex.

Character 1: This all sounds great, but we shouldn't expect people to always understand their relationships with one another. If people want to meet at a bar and not talk about their relationship, we shouldn't prevent them from having sex!

Reader's Theater

Character 3: Yes, but then they would just be using each other for their physical bodies.

Character 1: I think people can engage in ethical sex even if they haven't communicated every single thing about their relationship. When I go to hook up with people that I meet at a bar, I don't sit them down before having sex and say, 'what is our relationship?' because that would be weird.

Character 3: So what do you think ethical sex looks like?

Character 1: College students are adults and can make decisions for themselves. We should not try to tell other people how to live every aspect of their lives. As long as two people go home together and both verbally agree to have sex, that's all that matters. You can use each other for just sex as long as you consent to do so.

Character 4: Okay well obviously people need consent but what about when people are drunk? I think it is really harmful and dangerous if people engage in sex when they are not sober. Would you not include sobriety as a necessary condition for ethical sex?

Character 3: See this is what I am talking about when I say that being in a long-term marriage changes the dynamics of what ethical sex looks like. I've been with my partner for three years, and let me tell you--there have been a lot of times where we were both drunk and had sex, but we still weren't merely using each other as sexual objects. Our drunk sex was still ethical and good for our relationship.

Character 4: Okay, but you were in a long-term relationship with someone when that happened. It's different if you have two random drunk people who meet at a bar and 'consent' to sleep with each other. People who are drunk are in no capacity to make such decisions about their life. We don't even allow drunk people to drive cars because they might make decisions that harm themselves and others. The same applies here where real harm can occur when people who are not in a position to make a decision end up making one that they might regret.

Reader's Theater

Character 5: Okay. Let's say that you are right and you need to be sober to have ethical sex. What if the people having sex are in very different age ranges. Like, what if you had a 60-year-old and an 18-year-old, and they both consent to have sober sex. It seems wrong to say that consent is the only thing that is needed in this situation. We can't all think that it's okay for a 60-year-old to have sex with an 18-year-old. We need to account for other things than just sobriety.

Character 1: It shouldn't matter what their ages are. If both of them consent to have sex, we should trust their decision-making and understand that it is their right to consent to have sex with anyone as long as they are over 18. Beyond that, we can't draw an arbitrary line on what ages people can have sex at and when they cannot. After consent, whatever people decide between themselves is morally permissible.

Character 5: I see where you're coming from in terms of respecting adults' ability to freely choose who they have sex with. But when it comes to 18- and 50-year-olds, there might not be something illegal happening, but there is just such a large discrepancy in things like sexual experience, ability to be manipulated, and the very real possibility of harm as a result. Think about some 18-year-old who might have only learned about sex from classes that don't actually say anything about it other than to avoid it and from whatever they find on the internet and now they are having sexual experiences with someone old enough to be their own parent. I just don't understand how anyone could find that kind of sex ethical.

WEEK TWO LESSON PLAN

Topic: Understanding power dynamics, harm, and sexual projects.

Learning Objectives:

- Students will be able to better articulate how power dynamics influence sexual relationships
- Students will become more aware of and be able to develop an understanding of harm beyond rape or assault that can result from sexual experiences
- Students will be able to identify how an individual's sexual project relates to the sexual citizenship of others in instances of sexual harm

Readings:

Hirsch, Jennifer S., and Shamus Khan. *Sexual Citizens: Sex, Power, and Assault on Campus*. New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 2020.

Day Three: Power in Sexual Relationships

- Chapter 3: "The Toxic Campus Brew," Section: "Whiteness, Masculinity, Wealth and Power" (p. 73-85)
- Chapter 9: "Gender and Beyond" (p. 230)

Day Four: Understanding Harm in Sexual Relationships

- "Tea and Consent" YouTube Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pZwvrxVavnQ>
- Chapter 2: "Under One Roof," Section: "Landscapes of Pleasure and Landscapes of Assault" (p. 58-62)
- Chapter 6: "Acts of Entitlement, Self-Absorption, and Violence," Section: "Spoiler Alert: I'm The One Who Crosses Boundaries" (p. 146-152)

Overview:

Day Three: Power in Sexual Relationships

- Icebreaker
- Fishbowl

Day Four: Aftermath of Assault

- Discussion in small and large groups

Week Two Lesson Plan

Day Three: Power in Sexual Relationships

The exercising of power can be through a variety of means. It can include powers of persuasion, charisma, authority, force, or some other means. We want students to propose what they think power looks like when it comes to sex, and hopefully, there will be a good discussion about conflicting ideas. We also want them to see in the book how power was exercised and how power looks different in a variety of scenarios. We want students' notions of power to be challenged and help them to make distinctions in power on their own without being explicit about it.

For example, the authors talk about how power in sex is often viewed through the lens of a singular axis (often gender). However, it can also be conceived through age, socioeconomic status, peer networks, access to material resources, control over space, etc.; these are often situational.

Icebreaker Activity

Have students read the story of Charlene and JD (p. 240-242) and discuss in pairs for 5 minutes:

- Who, if anyone, had power in this encounter?
- Why did they have power?
- How was that power used?

Fishbowl Activity

Have 6-7 students from the class begin the discussion while the rest of the class listens. Let them discuss for 10 minutes uninterrupted. After 10 minutes, allow the rest of the class to join in. Note: The fishbowl discussion activity is traditionally done in the center or front of the room, but we've found it works well without moving students around. The decision is up to you and your class dynamics.

Give students the worksheet that we have provided before the fishbowl discussion. Have them discuss the first three questions for half of the class period (including the 10 minutes that the 6-7 students speak), then remind students to move on to discuss the case study for the remainder of the period.

Fishbowl Questions:

- Based on the book and your own personal thoughts, what do you think power is and how is it exercised when it comes to sex?
- Who has power in sexual encounters on college campuses?
- In sexual encounters, do people with more power have a greater responsibility?
- Do men have a greater responsibility in heterosexual relationships?

Week Two Lesson Plan

Day Three: Power in Sexual Relationships (cont.)

Case Study

Ted and Amy go on a first date, and Ted buys Amy dinner. They go back to Ted's place. While at Ted's place, Ted asks Amy to have sex. Amy likes Ted and wants to keep spending time with him, but feels hesitant about having sex after the first date. She says yes to Ted and they have sex. The next day, Amy feels upset that she had sex with Ted.

Did Ted have any power and did he abuse that power? Did he have any responsibility beyond a "yes" from Amy?

Week Two Lesson Plan

Day Four: Aftermath of Assault

To-do for the day:

- Students should read through the cases before coming to class
- Go through the worksheet and have students break into groups to discuss Diana and Austin's cases and how we should view those who harm others sexually
- If time permits, watch the "Tea and Consent" video and have students respond to the discussion questions

Something the book addresses in Chapter 8 is the aftermath of assault. However, the authors often steer away from making specific judgments on those involved and what students should do in response. In today's activity, we want students to broaden their understanding of those who harm others sexually and discuss what might be the best ways of responding to such harms.

Case Discussions

Diana

In Chapter 6, we are introduced to Diana. She had an achievement-oriented sexual project that focused on sleeping with people specifically for the goal of self-validation. This led to the disregard of a man's self determination and his own sexual citizenship when she made it her sexual project to 'turn' a gay man. After he initially rebuffed her and subsequently said, "I don't want to," she eventually extracted a 'yeah' out of him that they both understood he clearly did not want.

Discussion Questions

- Diana worried at first that she may have raped or assaulted the man involved although he didn't characterize it as such. Do you agree? What kind of harm (if any) occurred?
- What might an ethical response look like on Diana's part to the person she feels she assaulted?
- Does that involve reaching out to the person she harmed?
- What does justice look like for the person Diana had sex with?
- How best should Diana move forward personally?
- Reflect on how Diana responded in her own life to that event and whether or not you think she handled it well.

Week Two Lesson Plan

Day Four: Aftermath of Assault (cont.)

Austin

In Chapter 2, we are introduced to Austin. The authors describe him as someone who was keenly aware of and attentive to his girlfriend's sexual pleasure and citizenship, and they describe his story as "delightful." However, he comes to realize over the course of the interview that when describing a drunk sexual encounter with someone he had freshman year, he sexually assaulted that person and begins to tear up as he realizes what he has done.

Have students read the excerpt on p. 60 (which describes Austin's assault). Have them discuss the excerpt and then read the before and after (p. 58-62).

Discussion Questions

- Does your opinion on Austin as someone who committed assault change after learning more about him? The authors say, "Did Austin assault someone? Yes. Is he a terrible person? No." Do you agree?

Tea and Consent Video (Optional if time permits)

Discussion Questions (groups of 4):

- When someone says yes to tea, they may or may not clarify that they only want a certain kind of tea (e.g., they may want more honey and milk, but don't want sugar). How does this kind of consent relate to different kinds of sex?
- What does "yes" to sex entail? Is an explicit "yes" required for every step along the way?
- Do you think it's possible for someone to say they want tea just to be polite? How does that relate to having ethical sex?

THE CENTER FOR ETHICS & EDUCATION

We at the Center are committed to encouraging philosophical reflection on contemporary issues in education. This curriculum was developed for use in undergraduate and graduate education, philosophy, and sociology classes. It is available for free.

The Center for Ethics & Education is housed in the Wisconsin Center for Education Research (WCER) in the School of Education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. The Center supports the field of philosophy of education by supporting scholars, graduate students, practitioners, and policymakers in thinking analytically about ethical issues in education.

How did it go using this teaching guide with your class?
We'd love to hear from you!

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