

LET'S TALK ABOUT SEX

Why every Western student should take Human Sexuality

By Sam Dunaway
News Editor

As a graduating senior, I've spent my 180 credits exploring all the subjects that Western has to offer. From dance to psychology, my elective credits were put to good use in investigating fascinating subjects that help explain the world around me. My favorite of these classes was Human Sexuality, and I implore every Western student to take this class at some point in their college career.

I signed up for this class because I had mutual friends taking it and figured the subject would be interesting. In today's society, sex isn't something that's discussed in a healthy and honest way. This class looked like a good opportunity to have an open discussion about a topic that most individuals are discouraged from talking about.

The class, with the instruction of Amy Hammermeister Jordan, addressed many aspects of human sexuality. One topic discussed in the class was gender stereotypes and the harm that can come from placing harsh expectations on kids from the time they're toddlers. Expecting boys to be emotionless, strong and dominant, and girls to be submissive, dainty and polite can restrict how they view themselves and express themselves to the world.

The three biggest influences on young kids are parents, peers and the media. Kids start to learn how they should be behaving, what restrictions they have on their life choices

based on their gender and how to conform to society's expectations by rejecting their true self.

I've personally felt the weight of gender stereotypes my entire life. Being expected to dress a certain way, sit like a lady, smile, don't talk out of turn: these messages can be extremely harmful. From this class, I learned how not to perpetuate these stereotypes and how to encourage the next generation to be their true selves.

Human Sexuality introduced a topic that hadn't considered before taking this class: talking to kids about sex. Sexual education in schools is extremely limited and often nonexistent. Some schools and communities believe that, by not exposing kids to the topic of sex, they are less likely to engage in it. Unfortunately, this view of sexual education is common, but the reality is that education is powerful, and when young adults have accurate information and honest communication about sex, they have the tools to make positive decisions. When sex is a taboo topic, kids seek out less reliable sources of information and are more likely to make harmful choices.

With the topic of human sexuality, it was important to address all different types of sexuality. An open discussion about the LGBTQ+ community provided a safe space to ask questions, clarify definitions and educate students about the community. If you're like me and have no idea what queer, pansexual or intersex means, this class helps explain these terms to create a more educated community at Western.

The most important thing that you can learn from this class is the definition of consent.



Amy Hammermeister Jordan is one of two professors that teaches the Human Sexuality class at Western

While talking with friends and people that are close to me, it's obvious that they have a very unclear definition of consent, and this is because education about consent is often not taught in schools, leading most people to only have a slight idea of what the word means. While many individuals rely on vague and often misleading body language and physical cues for consent, they don't realize that consent is verbal, affirmative and ongoing.

Unfortunately, we can't talk about sex without talking about sexual assault. Sexual assault occurs far too often and can have a tremendous impact

on an individual's physical and mental health. Something anyone and everyone can take away from this class is how to help a survivor of sexual assault who has confided in you.

First, let them know that they have options, but never choose their path of healing for them — they can choose to report the crime, see a mental care specialist or they may do nothing at all. Listen to them, believe them and don't question them. The first person that an individual confides in after sexual assault can change their path of healing for the rest of their life.

It would take much more

than a page-long article to explain all the tremendous things that this class taught me. But all in all, talking about sex is important. Open, honest communication can lead to a healthy view of human sexuality, accurate knowledge of consent, better communication with a romantic partner and sexual education in schools that emphasizes knowledge instead of ignorance.

If you have a few extra elective credits to use, I'd highly recommend taking this class. You won't be disappointed.

Contact the author at sedunaway13@wou.edu