This class will ask you to read histories, fiction, film and social science studies in order to think deeply about the place of sex in American life since the nineteenth century. From slave narratives to interracial marriage, from coming out stories to films where sexuality appears only as a coded set of interactions, and from studies of the history of contraception, films about struggles against AIDS and research about the technologies used to change gender and to enhance erotic response, the course materials will help us explore just how much we talk, think and write about sex – about wanting it, not wanting it, having it, avoiding, punishing those who do have it, pathologizing those who don’t and policing bodies that seem predatory or dangerous. We will think about the history of sex panics, the role of medicine and law in making sexual identity and sexual pathology, and ask about how and why sex, religion and politics have become so intertwined in the US.