

## Sex Classes: 1926, 2011

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Yesterday, **in the New York Times Magazine, Laurie Abraham profiled** the graphic, frank and nonjudgmental Sexuality and Society class offered at Philadelphia's Friends' Central School. Abraham noted that "this sex-ed class may well be the only one of its kind in the United States."

Yet a look back at sex ed in earlier generations shows that some progress has occurred.

**This week, from the J-Vault: *The Status of Sex Education for Children* (1926)**

"In early days," explains Rachelle J. Yarros, "many of the ancient people worshipped sex as they did other mysterious forces which they did not understand."

In the more modern Christian world, the same fear has led to asceticism, the basis of which is a feeling that the sex impulse is essentially evil and must be suppressed.

Let us be honest with ourselves and frankly ask this question: How many of us received from our mothers or fathers intelligent explanations of sex or reproduction? You all know what falsehoods we were told and what chaotic ignorance existed in our minds...

...The more intelligent are beginning to realize the danger of complete ignorance and to feel the need of giving sex information to the child sometime, somewhere, somehow, but they fear that this knowledge, if given not "exactly in the right way" may awaken excessive sex curiosity and lead to disastrous experimentation... I wonder whether this is not simply another manifestation of our own sex taboo...

...The real problem of sex behavior among human beings arises primarily from the fact that they are ready to mate and may have the impulse to do so long before they are psychologically and socially fit. With animals no such problem arises, because they mate strictly according to impulse and pay the penalty, nobody registering the consequences. The human animal has evolved so far from this stage that the primary impulse of sex is not a satisfactory guide to behavior...

...As to the institution of marriage, which has more or less fostered certain ideals of sex relationship and greater protection and care for progeny, it, too, becomes a very important matter for the consideration of those who are interested in all phases of social hygiene. Some radicals claim that the institution of marriage is a failure or that it has outlived its usefulness. I am a radical myself and admit that all is not well in marriage, but am inclined

to believe that the institution is not wholly to blame for the problems that now confront us.

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