

Sexual Misconduct in Puritan America

Introduction:

When one thinks of sex, the last thing that comes to mind were Puritans. Our assumptions about Puritan sexual habits would suggest a very repressed sexual appetite, which is correct. However, a combination of suppression of sexuality through religion, no outlet for sexual satisfaction and the demographics of the Puritan colonies led to deviance from the proscribed social norms. Today, our society seems plagued by social immorality, rising divorce rates, unwed mothers, adultery, and sex crimes. However, these things are not just products of our own times. We must remember that the Puritans were also normal people with desires and weakness.

Instructions

In this assignment you will examine the aspects of gender relationships and sexual deviance in Puritan New England. You are required to write a short essay examining your choice of potential questions, derived from the sources provided.

Minimum Requirements

- 750 word minimum length (you are encouraged to exceed this)
- Your essay needs a thesis
- You must provide citations and footnotes
- Please keep your writing formal

Questions: Please choose one of the questions below to base your essay on.

- Analyze the relationship between what the law states and what the actual punishments were? In your assessment, were the Puritans lenient in their criminal sentencing?
- What crimes were worse in Puritan society? What are the most common and why?
- Under the law, what were the Puritan's view on gender, in regards to marriage and sexual deviance. Were the punishments for fornication and adultery different for women and men?
- In regards to sexual deviance, what protections if any, existed to protect people of lower social status. (i.e. servants, Natives, women, etc.)

Sources:

I have selected some primary and secondary sources for this assignment. They are located on the Eagle Online Course, under the assignment submission area.