

Prof. Margot Weiss**Office:** Center for the Americas (255 High Street), Room 211**Email:** mdweiss@wesleyan.edu**Office phone:** 860-685-5754**Office Hours:** open hours Monday 12:30-1:30 and Tuesday 4:15-5:30, or by appointment**Course Description**

This advanced seminar brings together queer theory with cultural anthropology to ask: Can there be a queer anthropology? Cultural anthropology and queer theory are sometimes opposed—some anthropologists find queer studies excessively theoretical, narrowly interested in Western forms of knowledge and power, and given to abstracted critique, rather than social explication. Yet even as anthropologists problematize queer theory’s assumptions, methods, and boundaries, queer theoretical insights and frameworks have generated new questions and approaches in the anthropology of sexuality—just as anthropology’s focus on the global, the comparative, and the ethnographic has enriched new work in transnational queer studies.

This course explores the possibilities of productively juxtaposing, combining, and even opposing anthropology and queer theory. Readings alternate between critical essays in queer theory and four brand new ethnographies (plus one historical text) that represent the cutting edge of queer anthropology. This structure will allow you to reflect on the connections, divergences, and similarities between the two field’s approaches to five linked themes. The first theme, “Queer Diversity,” focuses on neoliberal cultural formations and the commodification of queer; it includes Jane Ward’s *Respectably Queer*, on three LGBT activist organizations in Los Angeles. “Affective Archives,” our second theme, explores memory and queer emotions, ending with Deborah Gould’s *Moving Politics*, on affect, AIDS, and ACT UP’s history. The third theme, “Transnational Queer,” investigates the politics of sexual categories in a global context; we’ll conclude with Naisargi Dave’s *Queer Activism in India*, on lesbian activism and ethics. “Sexual Rights” returns to questions of neoliberalism, but with a focus on politics and the law; our ethnographic centerpiece is Cymene Howe’s *Intimate Activism*, on LGBT rights activism in post-revolutionary Nicaragua. Finally, we will tackle “Homonormativities,” forms of privilege and exclusion that can characterize LGBT / queer politics, reading Christina Hanhardt’s *Safe Space*, on gentrification, violence, and New York City’s gay neighborhoods.

Rather than consigning anthropology to “data” or “method” (and queer studies to “theory”), we will challenge ourselves to see both fields as providing methods and theories that might help us document and think through queer politics and activism. Throughout the course, we will pay special attention to the multiple meanings of “queer” and “politics”; to the challenges of documenting and historicizing queer activism in different cultural contexts; and to the divergent ways we – ethnographers and others – integrate our political positions with our research and writing.

Course Texts

1. Jane Ward (2008), *Respectably Queer: Diversity Culture in LGBT Activist Organizations*
2. Deborah Gould (2009), *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight Against AIDS*
3. Naisargi Dave (2012), *Queer Activism in India: A Story in the Anthropology of Ethics*
4. Cymene Howe (2013), *Intimate Activism: The Struggle for Sexual Rights in Postrevolutionary Nicaragua*
5. Christina Hanhardt (2013), *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History & the Politics of Violence*

Books are available at Broad Street Books and on reserve at Olin library. All other readings are available on the course Moodle.

Course Assignments

- Attendance and Participation – 20%
- 5 SHORT reading papers – 30%
- Final Paper Proposal/Annotated Bibliography – 5%
- Final Paper/Project – 45%

Attendance and Participation:

This is an intensive seminar course, so your active participation is crucial to its success. I expect you to come to class on time and prepared, and to contribute to our discussion in a positive, relevant, and respectful way. We will be reading challenging theoretical essays that often advocate opposing viewpoints. Thus, participation in this course means coming to class ready to ask questions, to think about what is at stake in these debates, and to begin to forge your own analysis. When responding to the material and each other, please aim to be generous, sympathetic, and supportive readers and listeners. Your participation should be grounded in the reading; pointing us to relevant sections of an article or to a particular quote is most productive. To aid in class discussion, please bring in particular quotations or pages that you wish to discuss. Aim for a collective approach; our discussion should allow us each to think out loud, with each other.

Short reading papers:

Our readings are clustered into themes, with one day of more queer theoretical essays (typically not anthropological) and a second day focused on an ethnography. On the day we'll be discussing the ethnography, please bring to class a short (2-3 page) reading paper that begins to connect the analytical readings to the ethnography. Do not use outside readings/research for these papers; they are intended to help you process and analyze the course material.

To begin, ask yourself: *How do these authors (perhaps differently) understand queer politics? (How) does the reading on the first day help us think about the material in the ethnography? What (if anything) is missing from the analytical framework or theoretical approach that is revealed in the ethnography? What is "queer" in these texts – and/or what is "political" or "activism"? What about "method" and "theory" in these texts: how do they work together, and how do they help us think through queer and/as politics? How do these readings connect or disconnect to other texts we have read?*

Once you have thought through these questions, focus in on one key topic. The paper is a short, critical essay (**NOT personal reflection** or narrative) -- think of these papers as a relatively informal (but proofread!) first draft of what could be a much longer paper. Keep your paper as tightly focused as possible, and jump right in to the argument without wasting space on extensive introductions or conclusions. Avoid generalizations and pontificating; instead, focus in on one issue or theme and make a succinct argument. You must back up all statements with textual citations and specific examples from the readings.

Final Paper Proposal/Annotated Bibliography:

You will turn in a proposal for your final paper (see below) that outlines your research question / starting point in 300-500 words, and includes an annotated bibliography of at least three sources (one paragraph per source) that you have consulted. Ask me if you have any questions on

appropriate sources; you may include one source from class (this is not required). Your proposal should be as detailed as possible in terms of the specific arguments and material you plan to address. Likewise, bibliography entries should not be generic summaries, but should explain how each source specifically illuminates or takes a position on your research question. The point is for you to do some preliminary research on your paper topic so that you understand the scholarly conversation around it, and get a jump-start on the final paper. After you turn in your proposal, we will meet to discuss it so that I can give you additional recommendations and assistance (I will continue to meet with you throughout the research project to help keep the project on track).

Final Paper/Project:

Your final assignment is a research paper on the aspect of Queer Anthropology of your choice. The paper should be 12-15 typed, double-spaced pages, and should demonstrate a critical understanding of the key concepts of the course. It can be a fieldwork or a library project and, if you are working on a related thesis, do come see me to discuss possible connections. At any rate, you should choose a topic in which you are particularly interested, and integrate the concepts and frameworks you have learned in the course with new perspectives or case studies you have researched on your own. Be on the lookout throughout the semester for a topic that intrigues you. If you are having trouble coming up with a topic, be sure to meet with me early in the term so that we can brainstorm together. On the last day of class, you will give a very short presentation on your topic in order to share your research with the rest of the class and also receive comments and/or advice from your classmates. The final paper is due: Saturday, 12/14 by noon by email (please send as a .pdf).

Extra Credit:

There is no designated extra credit in this class, but if you have an idea for a possible extra credit assignment or option, please let me know – I'd be happy to consider it.

Class Policies:

Policy on Absences: You may miss one class without explanation or penalty -- think of it as a sick (or health) day, and take it as you see fit. Otherwise, I will expect you in class. If you miss 3 or more classes, you will fail the course.

Policy on extensions: I do not typically grant extensions. If you have a dire family, medical, or other emergency that makes it impossible to complete your work for this class, please have your class dean contact me and/or speak to me about your options (such as taking an incomplete).

Policy on late papers: I will accept late papers with a grade penalty of one whole letter grade (=10 points) per day. For example, the paper is due at 5pm on Tuesday, and, had it been on time, you would have received an A (95). If you turn it in by 5pm on Wednesday, you will receive a B (85). Half days are ½ a letter grade.

Policy on computers/cell phones in the classroom: Do not text, use facebook, shop online, look at pictures of cats, tumble, etc. during our class. Your cell phone should be off or on silent and put away. If you take notes on your laptop or have another documented reason for having it in the class, you may bring it. Any use of your computer for non-class purposes will result in suspension of this privilege. Keep in mind that such use interferes with your ability to learn and focus on material; it is also distracting and disrespectful to me and your fellow students (read [this study](#) on how computer use in the classroom lowers grades for **both** the computer user *and other students within view*).

Resources:

Please come see me in office hours if there is any course material you do not understand, or if you need guidance on my expectations for papers, presentations, group projects, or any other aspect of this course. During my office hours my door is open (unless I'm meeting with a student, of course), so please come in and talk with me! If you cannot make my office hours, you can email me to set up an appointment. You can also post routine questions or comments on our course's Google group for me (or, when appropriate, other students) to answer.

Disability Resources

Wesleyan University is committed to ensuring that all qualified students with disabilities are afforded an equal opportunity to participate in and benefit from its programs and services. To receive accommodations, a student must have a documented disability as defined by Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the ADA Amendments Act of 2008, and provide documentation of the disability. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, **please contact Disability Resources as soon as possible**. If you believe that you need accommodations for a disability, please contact Dean Patey in Disability Resources, located in North College, Room 021, or call 860-685-2332 for an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations.

Honor Code:

All work must be done in compliance with the Honor Code. If you need help with proper citations or you have questions on how to avoid plagiarism, let me know or contact the **Writing Workshop**: <http://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/workshop/>

Course Schedule

Week 1 & 2: Introduction: Queer Theory / Anthropology

Tuesday, Sept. 3: Introduction to the Course

Tuesday, Sept. 10: Queer Studies → ← Anthropology

- David Eng, Judith Halberstam & Jose Munoz (2005), “What’s Queer About Queer Studies Now?” *Social Text*
- Tom Boellstorff (2006), “Queer Theory Under Ethnography’s Sign” *GLQ*
- Kath Weston (1996), “Theory, Theory, Who’s Got the Theory?”
- Margot Weiss (2011), “The Epistemology of Ethnography: Method in Queer Anthropology,” *GLQ*
- Tom Boellstorff (2007), “When Marriage Falls: Queer Coincidences in Straight Time” *GLQ*

Week 3 & 4: Queer Diversity

Tuesday, Sept. 17: Capitalism, Neoliberalism, Queer Liberalism

- David Eng (2010), “Introduction” to *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*
- Rosemary Hennessey (1995), “Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture” *Cultural Critique*
- Alexandra Chasin (2000), “Introduction” --or-- “Strings Attached” in *Selling Out: The Gay & Lesbian Movement Goes to Market*
- Wendy Brown (2006), “Tolerance as a Discourse of Depoliticization” in *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*
- Sara Ahmed (2012), “The Language of Diversity” in *On Being Included*

Recommended: Lisa Duggan, “Equality Inc.” in *Equality Inc.*

John D’Emilio (1983), “Capitalism and Gay Identity”

Wendy Brown (2005). “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy” in *Edgework*

David Harvey (2005). “Introduction” to *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*

In-class: *What is Neoliberalism?* (<http://sfoonline.barnard.edu/gender-justice-and-neoliberal-transformations/>)

Tuesday, Sept. 24: Diversity Culture

- Jane Ward (2008), *Respectably Queer: Diversity Culture in LGBT Activist Organizations*

Due: short reading paper #1

Week 5 & 6: Affective Archives

Tuesday, Oct. 1

- Sara Ahmed (2010), “Happy Objects” in *The Promise of Happiness*
- Ann Cvetkovich (2003), “Introduction” to *An Archive of Feeling*
- Heather Love (2007), “Introduction” and “The Politics of Refusal” in *Feeling Backward*
- José Muñoz (2010), “Queerness as Horizon: Utopian Hermeneutics in the Face of a Gay Pragmatism” in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*

Recommended: Ann Cvetkovich (2012), “Reflections: Memoir as Public Feelings Research Method” in *Depression: A Public Feeling*

Tuesday, Oct. 8

- Deborah Gould (2009), *Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT UP's Fight against AIDS*

Due: short reading paper #2

Week 7 & 9: Transnational Queer

Tuesday, Oct. 15

- Tom Boellstorff (2003), "Dubbing Culture: Indonesian Gay and Lesbi Subjectivities and Ethnography in an already Globalized World," *American Ethnologist*
- Kendall (1999), "Women in Lesotho and the (Western) Construction of Homophobia" in *Female Desires*
- Martin Manalansan (1995), "In the Shadows of Stonewall" in *GLQ*
- Gayatri Gopinath (2002), "Local Sites/Global Contexts: The Transnational Trajectories of Deepa Mehta's *Fire*," in *Queer globalizations*
- Jigna Desai (2002), "Homo on the Range: Mobile and Global Sexualities" *Social Text*

Recommended: Lisa Rofel (1999), "Qualities of Desire: Imagining Gay Identities in China" *GLQ*

FALL BREAK

Tuesday, Oct. 29

- Naisargi Dave (2012), *Queer Activism in India: A Story in the Anthropology of Ethics*

Due: short reading paper #3

Week 10 & 11: Sexual Rights

Tuesday, Nov. 5

- Dean Spade (2011), "What's Wrong With Rights," *Normal Life*
- Nancy Fraser (1995), "From Redistribution to Recognition? Dilemmas of Justice in a 'Post-Socialist' Age," *New Left Review*
- Lisa Duggan (2001). "The New Homonormativity" in *Materializing Democracy*
- Urvashi Vaid (1995), excerpt of *Virtual Equality: The Mainstreaming Of Gay And Lesbian Liberation*
- Elizabeth Povinelli (2006), excerpt of *Empire of Love: Toward a Theory of Intimacy, Genealogy and Carnality*

Tuesday, Nov. 12

- Cymene Howe (2013), *Intimate Activism: The Struggle for Sexual Rights in Postrevolutionary Nicaragua*

Due: short reading paper #4

Week 12 & 13: Homonormativites

Tuesday, Nov. 19: Race, Class, Nation

- Jasbir Puar (2007), "Introduction" to *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*
- Martin Manalansan (2005), "Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics in the Global

City” *Social Text*

- Cathy Cohen (1998), “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” *GLQ*
- Karma Chávez (2010), “Border (In)Securities: Normative and Differential Belonging in LGBTQ and Immigrant Rights Discourse,” *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies*
- Chandan Reddy (2011), “Freedom’s Amendments” in *Freedom with Violence: Race, Sexuality, and the US State*

Recommended: Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner (1998), “Sex in Public” *Critical Inquiry*

Tuesday, Nov. 26

- Christina B. Hanhardt (2013), *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*

Due: short reading paper #5

Week 14: Conclusions

Tuesday, Dec. 3: Connections, Divergences, Futures

- Tom Boellstorff (2007), “Introduction,” *A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer Studies, Indonesia*
- Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Eveline Kilian, and Beatrice Michaelis (2013), excerpt of *Queer Futures: Reconsidering Ethics, Activism, And The Political*
- *GLQ* (2011) special issue on “Rethinking Sex”

Final Paper due: Saturday, 12/14 by noon by email (please send as a .pdf).