

Prof. Margot Weiss**Office Phone:** 685-5754**Email:** mdweiss@wesleyan.edu**Office:** Center for the Americas (255 High Street), Room 201**Office Hours:** Tuesdays and Wednesdays, lot of slots -- make an appointment:<http://calendly.com/margot-weiss>

This junior colloquium will give you a solid theoretical foundation in the field of queer studies. Although "queer" is a contested term, it describes—at least potentially—sexualities and genders that fall outside normative constellations. Yet, as queer studies has been institutionalized in the academy, in popular culture, and in contemporary political movements, has “queer” lost its political charge? This course, a reading-intensive seminar, will give you the opportunity to explore the history and debates within the field of queer studies. We will start with some of the foundations, and then move to tensions and correspondences between queer theory and critical race theory, trans studies, anthropology, Marxism, feminist theory, and disability studies. Rather than understanding queer studies as a singular school of thought, we will continuously problematize queer studies as a field and a mode of analysis, asking: What kinds of bodies or desires does queer describe? What are the politics of queer? What are the promises of queer theory, and what are its failures? What is the future of queer?

This course is excellent preparation for a queer studies concentration in American studies. It is also part of the Disability Studies Course Cluster and the Social, Cultural, and Critical Theory Certificate.

Course Readings

All readings for this course are articles available on the course Moodle and as a course pack at Cardinal Printing. You might also want to check out the *Routledge Queer Studies Reader =QSR*, which has many of the essays (plus new ones). For background, check out Nikki Sullivan’s (2003) *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York University Press). Sullivan’s book is on reserve at Olin.

Course AssignmentsEverybody: (40%)

- Attendance and Participation – 15%
- Weekly (12) Reading Memos – 15%
- Class Show & Tell – 10%

Track 1: Short(er) Papers (60%)

- Three 5-7 page papers, each 20%

Track 2: Research Paper/Project (60%)

- Milestone 1: Research Project Proposal (1 page) – **not graded but required**
- Milestone 2: Literature Review / Annotated Bibliography (3-4 pages) – 10%
- Milestone 3: Abstract / Introduction / Synopsis (3-4 pages) – 10%
- Final paper of 15-20 pages, or the equivalent – 40%

Attendance and Participation: 15%

This is an intensive, reading-heavy course designed for an active learner. You will get out of it what you put in to it – your active participation and enthusiasm is crucial to its success. Come to class on time and prepared, and contribute to our discussion in a relevant, present, 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. Your participation should be grounded in the reading; pointing us to relevant sections of an article or to a particular quote is most productive. Remember, participation does not just mean talking, it means contributing to our collective learning – asking questions and expanding others' insights is often as useful as (maybe even more useful than) making declarations.

Weekly Reading Memos: 15%

Each week, bring to class a 1-page Reading Memo. Each Memo should contain 2 passages you wish to discuss in class (type them out: a passage can be anywhere from 1 sentence to 1 paragraph) and your notes, comments, or questions about each of the passages. Pick passages that you feel best encapsulate a point of view or issue that is central to that week's set of readings. The passages should be "meaty" enough to sustain class discussion; your notes on that passage should give us a starting place to dig in.

While you should take the time to read carefully and look up terms you do not understand, you are not expected to master the class material before class. Instead, the Memo is a chance for you to collect your thoughts about each reading and the readings as a whole. Once you have completed a week's reading, ask yourself: *How do these authors (perhaps differently) understand queer and theory? Which ideas are most important, controversial, enlightening, difficult to understand, provocative? What are the disagreements or debates in this set of readings? What do these authors argue is the function, point, or use of queer (or related) theory? How do these readings connect/disconnect to other texts we have read? And finally, what do you think about these arguments, concepts and analyses?* The passages and Memo should emerge from your careful reading practice, and allow you to direct our discussion in ways most conducive to your learning and interests. You will turn in these memos after our class, but they will not be graded (you will receive credit/no credit for satisfactory completion).

Class Show & Tell: 10%

Working either alone or with a partner, bring to class something that connects to our course, readings, or topics once during the semester. I will share some starting ideas, but feel free to get creative and to use this as an opportunity to share something you are excited to talk with us about. You will have 20-30 min (including discussion time) to: show a clip, show some images, take us through a website, read several passages out loud, play some music for us, bring in pamphlets for us to look at, bring in a queer object, stage a class debate, have us take a quiz, etc. Any media, any format – although it is your responsibility to make sure we are set up for whatever it is you want to do. Check with me the day before our class if you want to bring in something unusual. This portion of the class will be peer-graded (letter grades). You will sign up for a date (but not a specific topic) early on in the semester.

Track 1: Short(er) Papers (60%)**Track 2: Research Paper/Project (60%)**

→ you will pick a track before the first assignment is due (Friday, March 2)

Track 1 (Shorter Papers)

On assigned dates **during the semester**, you will turn in 3 5-7 double-spaced-page papers (each worth 20% of your course grade): March 2, April 13, and May 9. The papers are based on course material; they do not require additional research, but rather reflect your critical engagement with our course readings. Each paper is an analytical, argumentative essay; be sure to use specific examples backed by precisely chosen textual evidence. I will give additional guidance as the first paper due date approaches, and you will receive paper prompts before each due date. If you chose this track, you will not have anything due during finals week.

Track 2 (Final Research Paper/Project)

This track entails working on a research paper (or other substantive project) on an aspect of Queer Studies of your choice. The final paper should be 15-20 double-spaced pages. Choose a topic in which you are particularly interested, and integrate the concepts and frameworks you have learned in the course with new perspectives and analysis you have researched on your own. Be on the lookout throughout the semester for something you want to examine. Some options include: working in the LGBT/Q Special Collections at Olin, developing your own or someone else's Show & Tell into a paper, following up on one or more of the "**Want more?**" readings, or working on a topic that may serve as the framework for your senior essay or thesis. One great way to find materials is to peruse the table of contents in the journals *GLQ: The Gay and Lesbian Quarterly* and *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly*—you might also want to read *GLQ* and *TSQ* book reviews (in each issue).

Because this is a major project, you will approach it in stages—milestones to meet throughout the semester:

- **Milestone 1:** Research Project Proposal (1 page): Friday, March 2 (not graded but required)
- **Milestone 2:** Literature Review / Annotated Bibliography (3-4 pages): Friday, March 30 – 10%
- **Milestone 3:** Abstract / Introduction / Synopsis (3-4 pages): Friday, April 20 – 10%
- **Optional Milestone 4:** First Draft: Wednesday, May 10
- **Final paper** of pp. 15-20, or the equivalent, due May 16 by noon – 40%

I will give you Milestone guidelines in advance of each due date. We will also meet to discuss the research project several times during the semester.

*Extra credit

For extra credit, you can attend and write a brief (1-2 page) review of any relevant queer studies event.

Course Policies

1. Policy on Absences: You may miss 1 class without explanation or penalty: think of this as a sick (or health) day, and take it when you see fit. There is no need to email me unless you are dealing with something more serious, in which case we should have a more detailed conversation that will include your Class Dean. If you miss more than 2 classes, I may ask you to withdraw. Missing more than 5 classes is grounds to fail the course.

2. Policy on extensions and late papers: I do not grant extensions. You cannot turn in Reading Memos late. For the 3 Short Papers or any of the Research Paper Milestones: I will accept late papers with a grade penalty of 3 points (1/3 a letter grade) each day. You cannot turn in the Final Research Paper late, as it is due during your scheduled final. If you have valid reasons for needing more time, you will need to request an Incomplete for the course.

3. Policy on computers/cell phones in the classroom: If you take notes on your laptop or have another documented reason for having it in the class, please turn off the wireless. Do not text, shop online, look at pictures of cats, tumble, etc. during our class. Your cell phone should be off or on silent and put away. Any use of your computer for non-class purposes will result in suspension of this privilege. Keep in mind that laptops can interfere with your ability to learn and focus on material, and can distract others. Let's aim to be present with each other and our ideas.

4. Office Hours: I have office hours Tuesdays and Wednesdays; schedule an appointment using my online calendar: <http://calendly.com/margot-weiss>. Please come and talk to me about course material, dynamics, or any concerns or ideas you might have. My office is located in the Center for the Americas, 255 High Street, on the second floor (room 201). If you need to phone, my office number is 685-5754. If you cannot make any of my available times, email me and we will work out an alternative time to meet.

Students with Disabilities

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 disability as defined by the ADA. Since accommodations may require early planning and generally are not provided retroactively, please contact Accessibility Services as soon as possible. If you have a disability, or think that you might have a disability, please contact Accessibility Services in order to arrange an appointment to discuss your needs and the process for requesting accommodations. Accessibility Services is located in North College, rooms 021/022, or can be reached by email (accessibility@wesleyan.edu) or phone (860-685-5581).

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**: <https://www.wesleyan.edu/writing/writingworkshop/index.html>

Course Schedule

0. Wednesday, Jan. 31: Introduction: Queer and Theory

Introduction to the course: what is queer theory?

1. Wednesday, February 6: Queer Theory: Normalization and its Others

key terms: *normativity, queer, gay and lesbian, desire, heteronormativity*

- Teresa de Lauretis, 1991. "Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities" (to p. xi) *differences*
- Michael Warner, 1993. "Introduction" to *Fear of a Queer Planet*
- Eve Sedgwick, 1993. "Queer and Now" in *Tendencies* (up to p. 9 closely) **QSR**
- Judith Butler, 1993. "Critically Queer" in *Bodies that Matter* (up to p. 230 closely) **QSR**
- Gayle Rubin, 1984. "Thinking Sex" in *LGBT Reader* (to p. 16)

(Recommended Reading: Nikki Sullivan, *Critical Introduction*, Chapter 3)

2. Wednesday, February 14: Histories of Normativity: Queer of Color Critique

key terms: *quare, queer of color critique, respectability, race/racism/racialization*

- Evelyn Hammonds, 1994. "Black (W)holes & the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality" *differences*
- Gloria Anzaldúa, 1997. "To(o) Queer the Writer: Loca, Escritora, y Chicana" *Living Chicana Theory*
- E. Patrick Johnson, 2001. "'Quare' Studies OR (Almost) Everything I Know About Queer Studies I Learned from my Grandmother," *Text and Performance* **QSR**
- Audre Lorde, 1984. "The Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power" (read her other essays if you have time) in *Sister Outsider*
- Roderick Ferguson, 2005. "Of Our Normative Strivings: African American Studies and the Histories of Sexuality" *Social Text*

(Recommended Reading: Nikki Sullivan, *Critical Introduction*, Chapters 1 and 4)

In class: sexology

3. Wednesday, February 21: Queering Sex and Gender: Politics of Performativity

key terms: *performativity, resignification, performance, sex/gender/sexuality, drag*

- Judith Butler, 1991. "Imitation and Gender Insubordination" in *Inside/Out*
- Eve Sedgwick, 1992. "Introduction: Axiomatic" from *Epistemology of the Closet* (read 1-2, 15-35 closely and skim rest of axioms)
- Biddy Martin, 1994. "Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias" in *Diacritics*
- Judith Butler, 1994. "Against Proper Objects" *differences*
- Gayle Rubin, 1984. "Thinking Sex" in *LGBT Reader* (pp. 22-35)

(Recommended Reading: Nikki Sullivan, *Critical Introduction*, Chapter 5)

In class: Paris is Burning → Butch Queens Up in Pumps

4. Wednesday, February 28: Trans+Queer? Queering the Gendered Body

key terms: *trans*, transgender, cisgender, embodiment, subjugated knowledges*

- Susan Stryker, 2004. "Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin" *GLQ*
- Susan Stryker, 2006. "(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies" in *The Transgender Studies Reader II*
- Vi Namaste, 1996. "Tragic Misreadings: Queer Theory's Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity" in *Queer Studies*

- Jasbir Puar, 2006. "Mapping U.S. Homonormativities" in *Gender, Place and Culture*
- Scott Lauria Morgensen, 2010, "Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities" *GLQ*
- (REC) Margot Weiss, 2008. "Gay Shame and BDSM Pride" *Radical History Review*

➤ **TRACK 1: Friday, April 13: Short Paper 2 due**

9. Wednesday, April 18: Queer Power and Pleasure

key terms: *bodies and pleasures, desire, power/pleasure, fantasy*

- Cherrie Moraga and Amber Hollibaugh, 1983, "What We're Rolling Around in Bed with"
- Robert Reid-Pharr, 1996. "Dinge" *Women and Performance* **QSR**
- Leo Bersani, 1987. "Is the Rectum a Grave?" in *October*
- Juana María Rodríguez, 2014. "Introduction" to *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*

➤ **TRACK 2: Friday, April 20: Milestone 3: Abstract / Introduction / Synopsis due**

10. Wednesday, April 25: Queer Times, Queer Affect

key terms: *temporal drag, backwardness, repetition, affect*

- Elizabeth Freeman, 2000. "Packing History, Count(er)ing Generations," *New Literary History*
- Heather Love, 2007. "Introduction" *Feeling Backward: Loss & The Politics of Queer History*
- Sara Ahmed, 2004. "Queer Feelings" *Cultural Politics of Emotion* **QSR**
- Ann Cvetkovich, 2012. "Introduction" to *Depression: A Public Feeling*

→ Rachel Lewis lecture : 4/26 at 4:30

11. Wednesday, May 2: Queer Politics/Queer Futures

Key terms: *futurity, potential, queer, politics*

- Michael Warner, 1999. "Normal and Normaller: Beyond Gay Marriage" in *GLQ*
- Cathy Cohen, 1998. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?" *GLQ* **QSR**
- Lee Edelman, 2004. "The Future is Kid Stuff" in *No Future* **QSR**
- José Muñoz, 2009. "Queerness as Horizon: Utopian Hermeneutics in the Face of a Gay Pragmatism" in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*

12. Wednesday, May 9: Still, Queer Theory

- Lauren Berlant & Michael Warner, 1995. "What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?" *PMLA*
- David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, 2005. "Introduction" to *What's Queer About Queer Studies Now? in Social Text*
- Janet Halley and Andrew Parker, 2007. "Introduction" to "After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory," in *SAQ*
- Michael Warner, 2012. "Queer and Then?" in *The Chronicle of Higher Education*

➤ **TRACK 1: Wednesday, May 9: Shorter Paper 3 due**

➤ **TRACK 2: Wednesday, May 9: Optional Milestone 4: First Draft due**

➤ **TRACK 2: FINAL PAPER: Final papers are due 5/16 by noon**