AMST201: Critical Queer Studies

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Course Time: Thursday 1:10 – 4:00pm
Office Hours: Monday and Wednesday 1-2pm

Course Description

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. However, as queer studies has been institutionalized in the academy, in popular culture, and in contemporary political movements, many argue that today, "queer" shorthands gay and lesbian (or LGBT...), is too easily co-optable (e.g., “Queer Eye for the Straight Guy”) or that queer studies' construction of the body, desire, and sexuality effaces or ignores crucial material conditions, bodily experiences, or cultural differences. This reading-intensive seminar will address these debates.

After a brief exploration of some of the foundational works in queer theory, we will focus on the relationships--and disagreements--between queer theory and other social and cultural theories designed to illuminate and critique power, marginality, privilege, and normativity: critical race theory, transgender studies, anthropology, Marxism, feminist theory, and disability studies. Rather than understanding queer studies as a singular or coherent 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 perils? What are the key sites for queer activism today? 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 Moodle. For background, you might want to check out Nikki Sullivan’s (2003) *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* (New York University Press). Sullivan’s book is at Broad Street Books and also on reserve at Olin (along with a few other introductory guides to queer studies and queer theory, and all the recommended films in this syllabus).

Please be prepared to print out readings – or, you might consider making your own course packet.

Course Assignments

- Attendance and Participation – 15%
- TPQ Memos – 10%
- Class Project – 15%
- Midterm Paper – 25%
- Final Paper Proposal/Annotated Bibliography – 5%
- Final Paper/Project – 30%
Attendance and Participation: 15%
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. Your participation should be grounded in the reading; pointing us to relevant sections of an article or to a particular quote is most productive. If you like to take notes on your laptop, you may bring it to class; however, any use of your computer for non-class purposes will result in suspension of this privilege.

You may miss one class without explanation or penalty. Unexcused absences after one will negatively impact your final grade. If you think you have a valid reason for missing class (emergency, health problem, etc), please contact your class dean/other relevant Wesleyan official and have that person contact me. Excused absences are only granted when a Wesleyan official contacts me on your behalf (not when you send me an email).

TPQ Memo: Two Points and a Question: 10%
Every week (except the week you do your Class Project), you will come to class with a memo containing two points and a question from the readings. The memo has two purposes: first, to give you a formal opportunity to reflect on the readings in a connective or synthetic way before class begins and second, to serve as a starting place for class discussions. The memos – and the class as a whole – will require you to read the essays carefully, looking up terms you do not understand, and keeping notes as you read. 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?

To aid in class discussion, please note particular quotations or pages that you wish to discuss. You will turn in these memos after our class, but they will not be graded (you will receive credit/no credit). Instead, the memos are to help you think through the material we’ve read, connecting the various authors, sorting out ideas, and allowing you to begin to form your own analysis. During the semester, you may be asked to direct our class discussion using your memo.

Class Project & Presentation: 15%
Working either alone or with a partner, you will present on additional material (at least) once during the semester. The projects give the class additional information or a perspective different from that of the main reading – they are debates or problematics that complement or expand the readings for that day. So, for example, on the day we consider the debates between Queer Theory and Transgender Theory, the special topic is “Butch/FTM Border Wars,” a series of debates around the borders between butch lesbians and transmen. On the day we consider Queer Theory and Crip Theory, the special topic is “Performing Crip”; we will explore the politics of crip performance art. The projects entail reading additional essays, online material, or watching a film (see signup for details).

Your task is to present this material in a clear, comprehensible way that will enhance the class’s understanding and add to our discussion. Plan to spend 10 minutes or so explaining the main point of
the material and how it connects to the main readings for that day. Follow the summary with something interactive -- an exercise, a handout, short clips/media, excerpts from the reading, etc. – so that other students can engage with the material. And be sure to leave some time for questions and class discussion. I will also bring material to help us think through these projects, so be sure to tell me your plan (and the materials on which you will focus) by 10am the day of our class.

**Midterm Paper: 25%**
Just before Spring Break, you will turn in a 5-7 typed, double-spaced-page paper based on an essay prompt. The paper is an analytical, argumentative essay that reflects your critical engagement with course materials – it does not require additional research. Be sure to use specific examples backed by precisely chosen textual evidence. I will give additional guidance as the midpoint of the semester approaches.

**Final Paper Proposal/Annotated Bibliography: 5%**
You will turn in a proposal for your final paper (see below) that outlines your research question in 300-500 words, and includes an annotated bibliography of at least three sources (one paragraph per source) that you have consulted on the subject, detailing how each source contributes to your working argument. Ask me if you have any questions on appropriate sources -- you may include one source from class. Your proposal should be as detailed as possible in terms of the specific arguments and material you wish to consider. Likewise, bibliography entries should not be generic summaries, but should explain how they specifically illuminate or take 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 critical or 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.

**Final Paper/Project: 30%**
Your final assignment is a research paper on an aspect of Queer Studies of your choice. The paper should be 8-10 typed, double-spaced pages. I would like you to choose a topic in which you are particularly interested, and integrate the concepts and frameworks you have learned in the course with new perspectives, theories 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 (ask me if you would like to set up an appointment with Suzy Taraba, Head of Special Collections at Olin), developing your own or someone else’s Class Project into a paper, following up on one of the “Want more?” readings listed on the syllabus, 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 journal *GLQ*—you might also want to read their book reviews (in each issue of the journal).

Final papers are due **5/17 by 5pm by email (please send as a .pdf)**.

*Extra credit
You may do up to two extra credit assignments: an additional Class Project, or a brief (1 single-spaced page) review of a relevant queer studies event (a lecture, a film, etc.).
Class Policies

I do not accept late papers, nor give extensions.

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 or any other aspect of this course.

Students with Disabilities:
It is the policy of Wesleyan University to provide reasonable accommodations to students with documented disabilities. Students, however, are responsible for registering with Disabilities Services, in addition to making requests known in a timely manner. If you require accommodations in this class, please make an appointment with me as soon as possible, so that appropriate arrangements can be made. The procedures for registering with Disabilities Services can be found at: http://www.wesleyan.edu/studentaffairs/disabilities/index.html.

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

Thursday, January 24: Introduction: Queer and Theory
Introduction to the course
(plus links on Moodle)

Thursday, January 31: Queer Theory: Normalization and its Others
• 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
• Judith Butler, 1993. “Critically Queer” in Bodies that Matter (read up to p. 230 closely)
• Gayle Rubin, 1984. “Thinking Sex” in LGBT Reader (to p. 16)
(Recommended Reading: Nikki Sullivan, Critical Introduction, Chapter 3)
TPQ Memo 1

Want More?
• Michel Foucault, 1976. History of Sexuality, vol. 1
• Lynne Huffer, 2010. Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory
• Mark D. Jordan, 2012. “Foucault's Ironies and the Important Earnestness of Theory” in Foucault Studies: Special Issue on Foucault & Queer Theory
• Michael Warner, 1999. The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, & the Ethics of Queer Life

Thursday, February 7: Histories of Normativity: Queer of Color Critique
• 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
(Recommended Reading: Nikki Sullivan, Critical Introduction, Chapters 1 and 4)
TPQ Memo 2

Class Project: Sexology: Scientific Racism and the Homosexual Body

Want More?
• Siobhan Somerville, 2000. Queering the Color Line: Race and the Invention of Homosexuality in American Culture
• Roderick Ferguson, 2003. Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique
• Films: Black is ... Black Ain’t, Tongues Untied
E. Patrick Johnson and Mae G. Henderson, 2005. *Black Queer Studies*

**Wednesday, February 13:**
Recommended talk: Judith Butler, *Martin Buber’s Two Zionisms and the Question of Palestine* (Memorial Chapel)

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- Sarah Shulman, 2012. *Israel/Palestine and the Queer International*
- “Judith Butler turns down Berlin Pride Parade Award”

**Thursday, February 14: Queering Sex, Gender, Sexuality: Performativity**
- Biddy Martin, 1994. “Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias” in *Diacritics*
- Judith Butler, 1994. “Against Proper Objects” *differences*

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

TPQ Memo 3

**Class Project: Is Radical Feminism Queer?**

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- Film “Paris is Burning”
- Judith Butler, 1993. “Gender is Burning” in *Bodies That Matter*
- Annamarie Jagose 2009. “Feminism’s Queer Theory” *Feminism and Psychology*
- Robin Wiegman, 2012. *Object Lessons* (chapters 2 and 6)
- Mandy Merck, Naomi Segal, and Elizabeth Wright, 1998. *Coming Out of Feminism?*

**Thursday, February 21: Trans+Queer? Queering the Gendered Body**
- Susan Stryker, 2006. ”(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies” in *The Transgender Studies Reader*
- C. Jacob Hale, 1997. "Leatherdyke Boys & Their Daddies: How to Have Sex Without Women or Men" *Social Text*
- Emi Koyama, “2006. Whose Feminism is it Anyway?” *The Transgender Studies Reader*

(Recommended Reading: Nikki Sullivan, *Critical Introduction*, Chapter 6)

TPQ Memo 4

**Class Project: Butch/FTM Border Wars**
Want More?

- David Valentine, 2007. *Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category*
- J. Bobby Noble, 2007. *Sons of the Movement: FtMs Risking Incoherence in a Post-queer Cultural Landscape*
- Judith Halberstam, 1998. *Female Masculinity*
- Cressida J. Heyes, 2003. “Feminist Solidarity after Queer Theory: The Case of Transgender” in *Signs*

Thursday, February 28: Crippling Queer Studies: The Able/Normal Body

- Robert McRuer, 2006. “Introduction” to *Crip Theory*
- Eli Clare, 2001. “Stolen Bodies, Reclaimed Bodies: Disability and Queerness” *Public Culture*
- Eli Clare, 2003. "Gawking, Gaping, Staring" *GLQ*
- Anna Mollow and Robert McRuer, 2012. “Introduction” to *Sex and Disability*

TPQ Memo 5
Class Project: Crip Performance

Want More?

- Kim Q. Hall, 2011. *Feminist Disability Studies*
- Robert McRuer, 2006. *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*
- Eli Clare, 1999. *Exile & Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation*
- Terry Galloway, 2010. *Mean Little deaf Queer: A Memoir*
- Anna Mollow and Robert McRuer, 2012. *Sex and Disability*

Thursday, March 6: Queer Commodity Culture: Queers, Capitalism, Class

- John D’Emilio, 1983. “Capitalism and Gay Identity” in *LGBT Reader*
- Rosemary Hennessey, 1994. “Queer Visibility in Commodity Culture” (to p. 54, and 60-end) *Cultural Critique*
- Judith Butler, 1997. “Merely Cultural” *Social Text*

TPQ Memo 6
Class Project: Queer Pop Culture

Want More?

- *GLQ Forum, 2005: “Queer Eye” *GLQ*
*Jose Muñoz, 1999. “Pedro’s \textit{Real World}” in \textit{disidentifications}
Jeff Maskovsky, 2002. “Do We All Reek of the Commodity?” \textit{Out in Theory}
Margot Weiss, 2011. \textit{Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality}
Rosemary Hennessy, 2000. \textit{Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism}
Donald Morton, 1996. \textit{The Material Queer}
Kevin Floyd, 2009. \textit{The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism}
\textit{GLQ} special issue (2012) on Queer Studies and the Crises of Capitalism

\textbf{Midterm Paper due Friday, March 7 by midnight (email)}

\textbf{Spring Break!}

\textbf{Thursday, March 28: Queer Citizenship: The Hetero/Homonormative State}
- Lisa Duggan, 1994 “Queering the State” \textit{Social Text}
- Jasbir Puar, 2006. “Mapping U.S. Homonormativities” in \textit{Gender, Place and Culture} (or intro to TA)

\textbf{TPQ Memo 7}
\textbf{Class Project: Queers and the US State}
\textit{Want More?}
- Scott Lauria Morgensen, 2011. \textit{Spaces between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization}
- Eithne Luibheid, 2002. \textit{Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality At The Border}
- \textit{GLQ} special issue (2008) on Queer/Migration
- Erica Rand, 2005. \textit{The Ellis Island Snow Globe}
Thursday, April 4: Queer Politics: Radical, Liberal and Neoliberal

- Margot Weiss, 2008. “Gay Shame and BDSM Pride” Radical History Review

TPQ Memo 8
Class Project: A New Queer Agenda

Want More?

- Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, 1992. “Queer Nationality” boundary 2

Thursday, April 11: Global Gays? Transnational Queer Studies

- Dennis Altman, 1997. “Global Gaze/GLOBAL GAYS” in GLQ
- Don Kulick, 1997. “A Man in the House” Social Text

TPQ Memo 9
Class Project: Positionality and Ethnography

Want More?

- Evelyn Blackwood, 2005. “Transnational Sexualities in One Place: Indonesian Readings” Gender and Society
- David Valentine, 2007. “I Know What I Am” in Imagining Transgender
- Gloria Wekker, 1999. “What’s Identity Got to Do With It?” in Female Desires
Lisa Rofel, 1999. “Qualities of Desire” GLQ
Tom Boellstorff, 2007. A Coincidence of Desires: Anthropology, Queer Studies, Indonesia
Gayatri Gopinath, 2005. Impossible Desires: Queer Diasporas and South Asian Public Cultures
Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan, “Global Identities: Theorizing Transnational Studies of Sexuality”
Neville Hoad, 2007. African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization
Don Kulick, 1999. Travesti: Sex, Gender, and Culture among Brazilian Transgendered Prostitutes

Thursday, April 18: Queer Times, Queer Histories
- Elizabeth Freeman, 2007. “Introduction” to Special Issue: Queer Temporalities in GLQ
- Elizabeth Freeman, 2010. “Introduction” to Time Binds
- Carla Freccero, “Prolepses” from Queer / Early / Modern

TPQ Memo 10
Class Project: In the Queer Archive

Want More?

- Judith Halberstam, 2005. “Queer Temporalities and Postmodern Geographies” in In a Queer Time and Place
- Kara Keeling, “Looking for M — Queer Temporality, Black Political Possibility, and Poetry from the Future” (and watch The Aggressives) in GLQ
- Carla Freccero, 2006. Queer / Early / Modern
- Elizabeth Freeman, 2010. Time Binds
- Carolyn Dinshaw, 1999. Getting Medieval: Sexualities and Communities, Pre-and Postmodern
- GLQ special issue (2007) on Queer Temporalities
- Valerie Rohy, 2009. Anachronism and Its Others: Sexuality, Race, Temporality
- Tim Dean, 2011. “Bareback Time” in Queer Times, Queer Becomings
- Tavia Nyong’o, 2008. “Do You Want Queer Theory (or Do You Want the Truth)? Intersections of Punk and Queer in the 1970s” in Radical History Review

Friday, April 19: Final Project Proposal and Annotated Bibliography due (via email)
Thursday, April 25: Queer Futures?
- 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

TPQ Memo 11
Class Project: Queer Children

Want More?
- Ryan Conrad, 2010. Reviving the Queer Political Imagination
- Judith Halberstam, 2011. The Queer Art of Failure
- José Muñoz, 2009. Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity
- Elahe Haschemi Yekani, Eveline Kilian and Beatrice Michaelis, 2013. Queer Futures: Reconsidering Ethics, Activism, and the Political
- Radical History Review, 2008 Special Issue on “Queer Futures”
- Lauren Berlant, 2011. Cruel Optimism
- Sara Ahmed, 2010. The Promise of Happiness
- Michael Snidker, 2008. Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions
- Social Text dossier on “Speculative Life”

Thursday, May 2: Still, Queer Theory

Want More?
- Michael O’Rourke. 2011. ”The Afterlives of Queer Theory"
- GLQ special issue on “Rethinking Sex” (2011)
- GLQ forum “Thinking Sex/Thinking Gender” (2004) (especially essays by Heather Love and Amber Hollibaugh)
- SAQ special issue “After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory” (Esp. essays by Neville Hoad and Lauren Berlant)

FINAL PAPER: Final papers are due 5/17 by 5pm by email (please send as a .pdf).