

**Margot Weiss****Office Phone:** 860-685-5754**Email:** mdweiss@wesleyan.edu**Course Time:** Tuesday and Thursday: 2:30-4pm**Office Hours:** Tuesday and Thursday 12:00-1:00 in Center for the Americas 206**Course Description**

This seminar is an interdisciplinary exploration of the privileges and penalties associated with “the normal” in the United States. What is “normativity” if not a statistical norm? How are regimes of normativity produced, reproduced and challenged by various social groups?

Our emphasis this semester be on **Queer Studies**, which we will approach through an *intersectional* lens, paying attention to the ways such categories of identity as race, ethnicity, class, disability, gender and sexuality intersect to locate individuals within social terrains of power. Drawing on a wide range of genres, including novels, ethnographies, theory, memoirs and films, we will explore such topics as: racialization, social institutions and whiteness; the “marriage-industrial complex,” heteronormativity and the American dream; neoliberalism, privatization and the regulation of public space/public sex; biopolitics, “deviant” bodies and trans- embodiment; crip theory, disability, class and queerness; and the politics of queer activism.

Our course is centrally concerned with the ways bodily difference and social identity interarticulate with “normalness,” placing individuals within hierarchical power structures. Our goal, in understanding these intersections, is to think creatively about ways to challenge these forms of privilege and power.

**Course Texts***Required*

1. Eli Clare (1999), *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*. Cambridge, MA: South End Press. ISBN:9780896087880
2. Leslie Feinberg (1993), *Stone Butch Blues*. New York: Alyson Books. ISBN:9781555838539
3. Chrys Ingraham (2008), *White Weddings: Romancing Heterosexuality in Popular Culture*. New York: Routledge. ISBN:9780415951333
4. C.J. Pascoe (2007). *Dude, You're a Fag: Masculinity and Sexuality in High School*. Berkeley: University of California Press. ISBN:9780520252301
5. Samuel Delany (2001), *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*. New York: New York University Press. ISBN:9780814719206

*Optional*

6. Dwight A. McBride (2005). *Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch: Essays on Race and Sexuality*. New York: New York University Press. ISBN:9780814756867

**All books are available at the Bookstore and are also on reserve at the library. Articles are on Moodle.**

## Course Assignments

Attendance and Participation ----- 15%  
Discussion Leader ----- 15%  
Critical Short Papers ----- 40% (total – Paper Portfolio)  
Final Paper ----- 30%

### Attendance and Participation

You may miss two classes without explanation or penalty. Unexcused absences after two 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**).

You are expected to come to class on time and to contribute to class discussion in a positive, relevant and respectful way. 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. I expect you to be active in discussion and to shape the course with your own interests.

### Discussion Leader

Working with a partner, you will present on the readings once during the semester. Your presentation should provide a starting point for class discussion. This is your chance to guide and direct our discussion; it is worth 15% of your grade.

In your presentation, do not summarize - assume we have all done the reading. Instead, focus on giving the class a way to start thinking about/answering the following set of questions:

*What forms of social normativity are at work in these reading? What is “the normal” here? How are these norms produced, reproduced, enforced and/or challenged? Are these norms intersectional, and if so, in what ways (how do these social norms reflect the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class, disability or other axes of difference and identity)? How do these readings help us think about power and privilege - do they connect to/critique/etc other readings we have done?*

You do not need to have worked out in advance definitive answers to all of these questions. Instead, strive to illuminate these key issues with **specifics and examples** from the readings, by, for example, bringing relevant passages to the class’s attention, or comparing different authors. Your goal is to prompt interesting class discussion, so highlight things in the readings *you* found illuminating, challenging, surprising, informative, unusual, etc.

**On the day you present, please turn in a co-authored, short (one paragraph) summary of your presentation (what you expect/hope to cover in class).**

### Critical Short Papers / Paper Portfolio

You will turn in FOUR 2-3 page double-spaced critical reflection papers throughout the semester. There are six papers listed on the syllabus – so, you may skip two of them. The purpose of these papers is to give you a chance to write out a more sustained analysis of a specific issue. Avoid big generalizations and pontificating; instead, focus in on one issue or theme you have pinpointed in the unit, and explore that with as much detail as possible. Make sure you back up all statements with textual citations and specific examples from the readings.

Part of this assignment is to learn how to make a clear argument in a limited space, so do not waste your space with extensive introductions or conclusions – just jump right in!

The papers will be graded on a check system throughout the semester. At the end of the semester, you will return all four graded papers to me (as a Paper Portfolio) and I will give you a final grade. Your final grade for this portion of the course is based on your score on the papers, as well as your improvement over the semester.

In general:

√+ = a paper that integrates multiple readings with your own reflections and arguments; is clear, concise and well-written; avoids generalizations, backing up all claims with specific examples from the texts; avoids summary, and instead makes creative, interesting and careful points about the reading; and demonstrates that you have reflected carefully upon the reading. A √+ paper really stands out, and is the equivalent of an A.

√ = a paper that accomplishes some, but not all of the √+ paper; it may, for example, focus too narrowly on only one reading; rely too heavily on summary rather than your own reflections and arguments; make interesting points about the reading but neglect to provide specific examples from the texts; or it may have an unclear or confusing argument. A √ paper demonstrates that you have done the reading, but falls short of showing careful, integrated reflection. It is the equivalent of a B.

√- = a paper that accomplishes less than the √ paper: it may, for example, be all summary with no analysis; make factual errors about the readings; be poorly written; or rely solely on class discussion of a reading, rather than the text itself (and your reflection upon it). A √- paper does indicate that you have done (at least some) of the reading, but without either full understanding or critical reflection. A √- paper is the equivalent of a C.

No credit = Either failing to turn in a paper, or turning in a paper that does not accomplish any of these goals. In general, no credit is reserved for a paper that makes no reference to the readings or demonstrates that you have not done the readings.

**Extra credit:** You have two options for extra credit: 1) you may write one extra critical short paper, and/or 2) you may attend an appropriate campus event (a talk, a film, etc – ask me if you aren't sure the event you want to write on is appropriate) and write a 2-page paper discussing how the event relates to our course themes and readings. The extra short paper is due the day listed on the syllabus; the event papers should be turned in shortly after the event. You may do one or both of these options: the quality of your work on these extra assignments will contribute to your final grade on the Paper Portfolio.

**ALL PAPERS ARE DUE THE DAY LISTED IN THE SYLLABUS (including extra credit)**

### Final Paper

You will write a final paper of around 8 double spaced pages. The paper can be based on course readings, it can be an expansion of one of your reflection papers or it can reflect research on a new topic. Broadly, the paper must be relevant for the course: it must explore social norms, privilege and power in the United States. Beyond this, the focus of your paper is up to you.

Be on the lookout throughout the semester for something you want to examine. You will meet with me (at least) once to discuss your topic and make sure you are on track.

Final papers are due 12/17 by 5pm.

### **Class Policies:**

#### **LATE PAPERS WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. SERIOUSLY.**

You are strongly encouraged to come to 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 to me 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/deans/disability-students.html>.

### **Honor Code:**

All work must be done in compliance with the Honor Code, which prohibits:

- The attempt to give or obtain assistance in a formal academic exercise without due acknowledgement. This includes, but is not limited to: cheating during an exam; helping another student to cheat or to plagiarize; completing a project for someone and/or asking someone to complete a project for you.
- Plagiarism - the presentation of another person's words, ideas, images, data or research as one's own. Plagiarism is more than lifting a text word-for-word, even from sources in the public domain. Paraphrasing or using any content or terms coined by others without proper acknowledgement also constitutes plagiarism.
- The submission of the same work for academic credit more than once without permission.
- Willful falsification of data, information, or citations in any formal exercise.
- Deception concerning adherence to the conditions set by the instructor for a formal academic exercise.

For papers, please write and sign the following pledge:

*In accordance with the Honor Code, I affirm that this work is my own and all content taken from other sources has been properly acknowledged.*

For exams, please write and sign the following pledge:

*In accordance with the Honor Code, I affirm that this work has been completed without improper assistance.*

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

(all readings are due/to be discussed on the day they are listed)

### Course Introduction: Key Terms: Norms, Privilege, Power

#### Tuesday, September 7: Course Introduction

#### Thursday, September 9: Intersectionality and Privilege

Patricia Hill Collins, "Toward a New Vision" in *Privilege: A Reader*

Gregory Mantsios, "Class in America" in *Privilege: A Reader*

Alan Berube, "How Gay Stays White and What Kind of White it Stays" in *Privilege: A Reader*

#### Tuesday, September 14: Norms, Subjects and Power

Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," afterword to *Beyond Structuralism & Hermeneutics*

Julian Carter, "Introduction" to *The Heart of Whiteness* (focus on the beginning)

In-class: Gayle Rubin, "Thinking Sex"

### Racialization and Social Power: Race, Class, Sexuality

#### Thursday, September 16: Racialization

Michael Omi and Howard Winant, "Racial Formation" in *Racial Formation in the United States*

George Lipsitz, "The Possessive Investment in Whiteness" in *American Quarterly*

#### Tuesday, September 21: Whiteness and Class

Richard Dyer, "The Matter of Whiteness" in *Privilege: A Reader*

Karen Brodtkin, "How Jews Became White Folk" in *How Jews Became White Folk*

Amber Hollibaugh, "A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home" in *My Dangerous Desires*

#### Discussion Leaders

#### Thursday, September 23: Race, Sexuality and Representation

Dwight McBride, "Why I Hate Abercrombie and Fitch" and "It's a White Man's World" in *Why I Hate Abercrombie & Fitch*

bell hooks, "Selling Hot Pussy" in *Black Looks*

#### Paper 1 due

### Social Institutions: Heteronormativity from High School to Marriage

#### Tuesday, September 28: Ideology and Heteronormativity

Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses" in *Lenin and Philosophy*

Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public" in *Critical Inquiry*

In-class: "The Heterosexual Imaginary"

#### Thursday, September 30: Masculinity and Sexuality

C. J. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag* (Ch. 1-3)

#### Discussion Leaders

#### Tuesday, October 5: Dude, You're a Fag

C. J. Pascoe, *Dude, You're a Fag* (Ch. 4-end)

#### Thursday, October 7: The Wedding-Industrial Complex

Chrys Ingraham, *White Weddings* (Ch 1-3)

In-class: wedding magazines, websites

**Discussion Leaders**

**Tuesday, October 12: Same-sex Marriage**

Michael Warner, "Beyond Gay Marriage" in *The Trouble with Normal*

In-class: "Is Gay Marriage Racist?" from *That's Revolting*

**Paper 2 due**

**Biopolitics: Bodies and Trans- Embodiment**

**Thursday, October 14: Biopower**

Michel Foucault, "Society Must Be Defended" in *Society Must Be Defended*

David Valentine, "Sue. E. Generous: Notes Toward a Theory of Non-Transexuality" *unpublished manuscript*

**Tuesday, October 19: No Class -- Fall Break**

**Thursday, October 21: Trans Studies**

Susan Stryker, "Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin?" in *GLQ*

David Valentine, "I Know What I Am" in *Imagining Transgender*

Jacob Hale, "Leatherdyke Boys and their Daddies" in *GLQ*

Recommended: Riki Anne Wichins, "Why Identity Politics Really, Really Sucks" in *Read My Lips*

Emi Koyama, "The Unspoken Racism of the Trans Inclusion Debate" *Trans Studies Reader*

**Discussion Leaders**

**Tuesday, October 26**

START READING *Stone Butch Blues*

In-class: Film TBD (The Aggressives, Paris is Burning, Boy I Am, etc.)

**Thursday, October 28: Stone Butch Blues**

Leslie Feinberg, *Stone Butch Blues*

**Discussion Leaders**

**Paper 3 due**

**Crip Theory: Disability, Class, Queerness**

**Tuesday, November 2: Crip Theory**

Carol Breckenridge and Candace Vogler, "The Critical Limits of Embodiment" in *Public Culture*

Robert McRuer, "Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability"

**Thursday, November 4**

START READING Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*

In-class: Vital Signs: Crip Culture Talks Back

**WORKSHOP with Eli Clare: "Moving Beyond Pity"**

**Friday, November 5:** FGSS Talk: Eli Clare

**Tuesday, November 9: Eli Clare**

Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride: Disability, Queerness, and Liberation*

**Discussion Leaders**  
**Paper 4 due**

**Neoliberalism: Politics of Public Sex**

**Thursday, November 11: Neoliberalism**

Lisa Duggan, "Equality, INC" in *Twilight of Equality*

Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy" in *Edgework*

**Tuesday, November 16: Anthropology and Queer Politics**

Margot Weiss, "Gay Shame and BDSM Pride" in *Radical History Review*

Martin Manalansan, "Race, Violence, and Neoliberal Spatial Politics" in *Social Text*

Recommended David Harvey, "The Right to the City"

**Discussion Leaders**

**Thursday, November 18: no class (AAAs)**

START READING *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*

**Tuesday, November 23: Times Square**

Samuel Delany, *Times Square Red, Times Square Blue*

**Discussion Leaders**

**Paper 5 due**

**Critique/Politics of the Future**

**Thursday, November 25: Thanksgiving**

**Tuesday, November 30: Deviant Bodies and National Politics**

Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai, "Monster-Terrorist-Fag" *Social Text*

Margot Weiss, "'Rumsfeld!': Consensual BDSM and 'Sadomasochistic' Torture" in *Out in Public*

**Thursday, December 2: What are we Fighting For? Queer Politics**

Cathy Cohen. "Punks, Bulldaggers and Welfare Queens" in *GLQ*

Joshua Gamson, "Must Identity Movements Self-Destruct?" in *Social Problems*

Recommended Liz Highleyman, "Radical Queers or Queer Radicals?"

In-class: Scott Tucker, *Fighting Words*

**Discussion Leaders**

**Tuesday, December 7: Queer Activism**

Mattilda AKA Matt Bernstein Sycamore, *That's Revolting! Queer Strategies for Resisting Assimilation*, selection TBA

**Discussion Leaders**

**Paper 6 due**

**Thursday, December 9:** Wrap-up; final class

**Final papers due: December 17 by 5pm**