AMST201: Critical Queer Studies

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Course Description
This junior colloquium will give you a solid theoretical foundation in the field of queer studies. “Queer” is a contested term, describing—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 (and etc.), 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, racial, gendered, 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 give us the tools to critique power, marginality, 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? What are its perils? What are the key sites for queer activism today? What is the future of queer?

This course is ideal 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, 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 at Broad Street Books and also on reserve at Olin.

Course Assignments
- Attendance and Participation – 15% (inc. Tumblr)
- TPQ Memos – 15%
- Class Project – 15%
- Midterm Paper – 25%
- Final Paper Proposal/Annotated Bibliography – not graded
- Final Paper/Project – 30%

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 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. Remember, participation does not just mean talking, it means contributing to our collective learning. Posting on Tumblr is a good way to add to your participation grade.

**TPQ Memo: Two Points and a Question: 15%**

Every week (except the week you do your Class Project), you will come to class with a ½ - 1 page 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 supplementary information; they are debates or problematics that complement or expand the readings for that day. The projects entail reading additional essays and/or watching a film. 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 5-10 minutes 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 students can engage with the material. And be sure to leave time for questions and 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 4pm the day of our class. **You are encouraged to meet with me in office hours to discuss the projects.**

**Midterm Paper: 25%**

At the midterm point, 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 paper due date approaches.

**Final Paper Proposal/Annotated Bibliography: not graded**

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. Your proposal should be as detailed as possible; 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.

Final Paper/Project: 30%
Your final assignment is a research paper (or other substantive project) on an aspect of Queer Studies of your choice. The paper should be 8-10 typed, 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, 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 or more 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: The Gay and Lesbian Quarterly*—you might also want to read *GLQ* book reviews (in each issue).

Final papers are due **12/10 by 5pm by email (please send as a .pdf)**.

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

Course Policies

1. **Policy on Absences**: You may miss two classes without explanation or penalty: think of these as your sick (or health) days, and take them as you see fit. Otherwise, I will expect you in class. If you miss more than 5 classes, you will fail the course.

2. **Policy on extensions and late papers**: I do not grant extensions. 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. You cannot turn in TPQs late.

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, 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. 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; they are also distracting 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, if you want to talk through the course material or dynamics, or if you need guidance on my expectations for papers, presentations, group projects, or any other aspect of this course. Use my online calendar—http://calendly.com/margot-weiss—to make an appointment. If you cannot make any of my available
times, email me and I will work out an alternative time to meet with you.

**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 860-685-5581 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. Tuesday, September 2: Introduction: Queer and Theory
Introduction to the course: what is queer theory?

Week 2. Tuesday, September 9: Queer Theory: Normalization and its Others
- Judith Butler, 1993. “Critically Queer” in Bodies that Matter (up to p. 230 closely) QSR
(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
- Michael Warner, 1999. The Trouble with Normal: Sex, Politics, & the Ethics of Queer Life

Week 3. Tuesday, September 16: Histories of Normativity: Queer of Color Critique
(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
- Films: Black is ... Black Ain’t, Tongues Untied

Week 4. Tuesday, September 23: Queering Sex and Gender: Politics of Performativity
• 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)

**TPQ Memo 3**

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

In class: *Paris is Burning*, redux

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- 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?*

**Week 5. Tuesday, September 30: Crippling Queer Studies: The Able/Normal Body**

- Robert McRuer, 2006. “Introduction” to *Crip Theory* *QSR*
- 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 4**

In class: crip performance / video (*Vital Signs, F*ck the Disabled, Sick*)

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- Kim Q. Hall, 2011. *Feminist Disability Studies*
- Eli Clare, 1999. *Exile & Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation*
- Terry Galloway, 2010. *Mean Little deaf Queer: A Memoir*

**THURSDAY, Oct 2: Robert McRuer lecture**

**Week 6. Tuesday, October 7: Trans+Queer? Queering the Gendered Body**

• Susan Stryker, 2006. "(De)Subjugated Knowledges: An Introduction to Transgender Studies" in The Transgender Studies Reader II
• 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 5

Class Project: Butch Lesbian/Transmen Border Wars
In class: My Gender Workbook

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  v David Valentine, 2007. Imagining Transgender: An Ethnography of a Category
  v J. Bobby Noble, 2007. Sons of the Movement: FtMs Risking Incoherence in a Post-queer Cultural Landscape
  v Judith Halberstam, 1998. Female Masculinity QSR
  v Kate Bornstein and S. Bear Bergman. Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation

Week 7. Tuesday, October 14: 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
In class: Queer Eye for the Straight Guy

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  v *GLQ Forum, 2005: “Queer Eye” GLQ
  v *Jose Muñoz, 1999. “Pedro’s Real World” in disidentifications
  v *Danae Clark, 1991. “Commodity Lesbianism” Camera Obscura
  v Rosemary Hennessy, 2000. Profit and Pleasure: Sexual Identities in Late Capitalism QSR
  v Jeff Maskovsky, 2002. “Do We All Reek of the Commodity?” Out in Theory
  v Donald Morton, 1996. The Material Queer
  v Kevin Floyd, 2009. The Reification of Desire: Toward a Queer Marxism
  v GLQ special issue (2012) on Queer Studies and the Crises of Capitalism
Midterm Paper due Friday, October 17 by 10pm (email)

Week 8. Tuesday, October 21: FALL BREAK

Week 9. Tuesday, October 28: Queer History, Queer Cultures

- Dennis Altman, 1997. “Global Gaze/Global Gays” in *GLQ*
- Martin Manalansan, 1995. “In the Shadows of Stonewall” in *GLQ*
- David Halperin, 2000. “How to do the History of Male Homosexuality” *GLQ QSR*

TPQ Memo 7

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- Evelyn Blackwood, 2005. “Transnational Sexualities in One Place: Indonesian Readings” *Gender and Society*
- David Valentine, 2007. “I Know What I Am” in *Imagining Transgender*
- 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*
- Arnaldo Cruz-Malave and Martin Manalansan, 2002. *Queer Globalizations: Citizenship and the Afterlife of Colonialism*

October 31: Conversation with Reina Gossett and Amber Hollibaugh

Week 10. Tuesday, November 4: Beyond Heteronormativities

- Jasbir Puar, 2006. “Mapping U.S. Homonormativities” in *Gender, Place and Culture*
- Scott Lauria Morgensen, 2010, “Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities” *GLQ*

TPQ Memo 8

Class Project: Querres and the US State

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v Scott Lauria Morgensen, 2011. *Spaces between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*
v Jafari S. Allen, 2013. “‘Race/Sex Theory ‘Toward A New And More Possible Meeting’” *Cultural Anthropology*
v Eithne Luibheid, 2002. *Entry Denied: Controlling Sexuality At The Border*
v Margot Weiss, 2009. “‘Rumsfeld!: Consensual BDSM and ‘Sadomasochistic’ Torture at Abu Ghraib’” in *Out in Public*
v GLQ special issue (2008) on Queer/Migration
v Erica Rand, 2005. *The Ellis Island Snow Globe*

**Week 11. Tuesday, November 11: Queer Power and Pleasure**

- Cherrie Moraga and Amber Hollibaugh, 1983, “What We’re Rolling Around in Bed With”
- Leo Bersani, 1987. “Is the Rectum a Grave?” in *October*
- Juana María Rodríguez, 2011. “Queer Sociality and Other Sexual Fantasies” *GLQ*

**TPQ Memo 9**

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v Margot Weiss, 2011. *Techniques of Pleasure: BDSM and the Circuits of Sexuality*
v Tim Dean, 2009, *Unlimited Intimacy: Reflections On The Subculture Of Barebacking*
v Richard Fung, “Looking for my Penis: The Eroticized Asian in Gay Video Porn”
v Juana María Rodríguez, *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*
v Kane Race, 2009. *Pleasure Consuming Medicine: The Queer Politics of Drugs*
v Patrick Califia, *Public Sex: The Culture of Radical Sex*
v Lynda Hart, 1998. *Between the Body and the Flesh: Performing Sadomasochism*
v Amber Hollibaugh, *My Dangerous Desires: A Queer Girl Dreaming Her Way Home*

**Week 12. Tuesday, November 18: Queer Times, Queer Affect**


**TPQ Memo 10**

**Class Project: In the Queer Archive**

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Jose Esteban Munoz, “Feeling Brown, Feeling Down: Latina Affect, the Performativity of Race, and the Depressive Position” *QSR*

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

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 QSR*


Lauren Berlant, 2011. *Cruel Optimism*

Sara Ahmed, 2010. *The Promise of Happiness*

Michael Snediker, 2008. *Queer Optimism: Lyric Personhood and Other Felicitous Persuasions*

Kathleen Stewart, *Ordinary Affects*

Art Journal’s Forum: Conversations on Queer Affect and Queer Archives

Ann Cvetkovich, 2007. “Public Feelings,” *South Atlantic Quarterly*

Ann Cvetkovich, *Depression*

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**Friday, November 21:** Final Paper Proposal/Annotated Bibliography due by 10pm via email

**Week 13. Tuesday, November 25: Queer Politics: Radical, Liberal and Neoliberal**


- 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: A New Queer Agenda**

*Want More?*


- Christina Hanhardt, *Safe Space: Gay Neighborhood History and the Politics of Violence*


Week 14. Tuesday, December 2: Still, Queer Theory
• Lauren Berlant & Michael Warner, 1995. “What Does Queer Theory Teach Us about X?” PMLA
• Janet Halley and Andrew Parker, 2007. “Introduction” to “After Sex? On Writing since Queer Theory,” in SAQ

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 12/10 by 5pm by email (please send as a .pdf).