

George Mason University Women and Gender Studies Program

WMST 402/602: QUEER THEORY/QUEER OF COLOR CRITIQUE

Spring 2023

Wednesdays, 4:30pm—7:10pm

Class Location: Online via Zoom

INSTRUCTOR INFORMATION

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Women and Gender Studies Program

George Mason University

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Office: Johnson Center Room 240C

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Office Hours: by appointment

Course Description

This course offers an introduction to the historical and contemporary theoretical debates that have helped to shape the interdisciplinary fields of queer studies and queer of color critique. We will pay particularly close attention to the ways in which queer theories intersect with other interdisciplinary areas of thought, including feminist and lesbian theory, psychoanalysis and poststructuralist theory, disability theory, Marxist and postcolonial theory, critical race theory, and theories of transnationalism and globalization. In doing so, our primary goal is to use queer theories both as a basis for understanding social inequalities, and as a way of developing forms of resistance to those inequalities. Other course goals include the following:

- (1) To get a sense of the potential scope of queer studies and queer of color critique and become familiar with their language, theories, and methods of critical engagement
- (2) To consider what kinds of connections exist (or should exist) between queer theory and queer activism
- (3) To gain a better understanding of the ways in which sexuality intersects with gender, race, class, ability, nation, ethnicity, religion, and political economy
- (4) To address new forms of social inequality emerging within the context of globalization

Required Texts

- Matt Brim, *Poor Queer Studies: Confronting Elitism in the University* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2020).

- Jian Neo Chen, *Trans Exploits: Trans of Color Cultures and Technologies in Movement* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2019).
- Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2007).
- Additional readings will be available online through Blackboard.

The required texts are available for purchase through the campus bookstore. Alternatively, you may purchase the course texts through any other bookstore or online retailer.

WMST 402 Course Requirements

- Class attendance and participation: 20%
- One 12-15 minute in class presentation on the assigned readings: 15%
- One 4-5 page analytical essay: 20%
- Annotated bibliography for the final research paper: 10%
- A final research paper (9-12 pages) on any subject relating to queer theory, due on Wednesday, May 10th via email: 35%

WMST 602 Course Requirements

- Class attendance and participation (including one in class presentation on the assigned readings): 30%
- One 6-8 page analytical essay: 20%
- Annotated bibliography for the final research paper: 10%
- A final research paper (18-20 pages) on any subject relating to queer theory, due on Wednesday, May 10th via email: 40%

NOTE: Assignments are due at the beginning of class on the assigned date. Any papers submitted after the due date will be subject to a late penalty.

Incompletes will not be awarded, except in cases of severe illness.

Attendance and Participation

Attendance: your daily presence is critical to the success of the class. An excused absence requires proper documentation (i.e. a doctor's note or written proof of participation in a University or work-related event). If you are more than 20 minutes late for class, your lateness will be considered ½ an absence. You are responsible for making up missed work and obtaining any materials that are handed out during the missed class. Be aware that repeated unexcused absences will impact your participation grade.

Participation: participation means coming to class ready and prepared to make an active contribution to our discussions. In class participation consists of all in class work (i.e. class discussions, informal presentations, group work etc.).

This course follows a standard seminar format. Students are expected to attend class and contribute to each week's discussion of the readings. More than one absence from class requires makeup work in the form of a three-page essay on the literature for the missed class. This work cannot count toward the student's short essay.

Class participation includes general participation in class discussion, leading class sessions, peer feedback on proposals and a presentation of a research proposal. To facilitate widespread discussion, students should come prepared with at least two questions for each class. Class participation also includes discussing research projects and providing peer feedback for proposals.

Leading class discussion: Students assigned to the same day may collaborate on how to present the readings and the class discussion. Students should summarize the argument for the readings and then ask questions based on the thesis and supporting evidence. Students should prepare a minimum of 4-5 questions in all.

Analytical essay: Students will write one short paper analyzing the readings of one class session. In addition to examining the authors' arguments, students may structure their essay in the following ways: What are the differences and commonalities in the themes and arguments across the literature? How well does the evidence support the argument or thesis? How do the themes and arguments of the literature fit in with other course readings? What are other approaches or questions that arise from the literature? The paper is due a week after the class of choice discussion.

Proposal and annotated bibliography: undergraduate students should use at least 6 scholarly sources for the final research paper; graduate students should use at least 12-15 scholarly sources for the final research paper.

On **April 5** students will provide me with an electronic copy of their research proposal and annotated bibliography.

On **April 26** graduate students will discuss their research projects.

On **May 3** undergraduate students will discuss their research projects.

For the research proposal and annotated bibliography, students should include the following information as thoroughly as possible given the amount of research conducted.

1. State the thesis or the question(s) you want to explore in your paper. What do you hope to get out of your research? Your thesis statement should be analytical, displaying your intention of making an argument related to a specific topic. Your paper should not just be descriptive but should focus on asking questions of your topic that address issues of efficacy, tactics, strategy, bias, methodology, etc. related to a particular problem or issue.
2. Explain the importance of the theoretical topic. Why is this topic worthy of research? What is the public concern with this issue? What conclusions do you expect to reach?

3. Write an annotated bibliography of at least 5 scholarly sources (undergraduate students) or 10-12 scholarly sources (graduate students). Summarize the text and then state how you believe it will help you with your research. Annotations should be brief, written in short paragraph form.

Late or Missing Work

Assignments are due as indicated above and/or as announced in class. You must complete all the assignments listed above to pass this class. Late assignments will be penalized by 20% for each day that they are late.

Plagiarism and Academic Integrity

All the work you submit in this course must have been written for this course and must originate with you in form and in content and with all sources fully and specifically acknowledged. In this course, the normal penalty for a violation of the code is an “F” for the term. Violations may also subject you to disciplinary action including the following: receiving a failing grade on an assignment; receiving a notation of a violation of academic integrity on your transcript; or being suspended from the University. You have the right to appeal any charges. For further information about the University’s policy regarding academic integrity see: <http://mason.gmu.edu/~montecin/plagiarism.htm>

Collaborative work of the following kinds is authorized in this course: peer review and critique of students’ essays by one another and, when approved by the instructor in particular cases, collaborative projects by pairs of students.

University Policies

I respect and uphold University policies and regulations pertaining to the observation of religious holidays; assistance available to the physically handicapped, visually and/or hearing-impaired student; plagiarism; sexual harassment; and racial or ethnic discrimination. All students are advised to become familiar with the respective University regulations and are encouraged to bring any questions or concerns to my attention.

Students With Disabilities

Disabilities will be accommodated in conjunction with the Office of Disability Resources. If you think you have a qualified disability and need special accommodations, you should notify me and request verification of eligibility for accommodations from the Office of Disability Resources as soon as possible. You will need to contact the office at 703-993-2472.

Instructor-Student Interaction

Please take advantage of my office hours or schedule alternative times to see me if those hours don’t work for you, especially when you are writing papers. I am happy to speak with students about any aspect of the course. You may also e-mail me with any questions and comments about the course. Don’t, however, use e-mail as a substitute for coming to office hours. If you have substantive questions or comments, please come and see me.

Women and Gender Studies Commitment to Diversity Statement

The Women and Gender Studies program seeks to create a learning environment that fosters respect for people across identities. We welcome and value individuals and their differences, including gender expression and identity, race, economic status, sex, sexuality, ethnicity, national origin, first language, religion, age, and ability. We encourage all members of the learning environment to engage with the material personally, but to also be open to exploring and learning from experiences different than their own.

The Women and Gender Studies Center is located in the Johnson Center, Room 240K. The Women and Gender Studies Center organizes a variety of lectures, workshops, and activities relevant to campus life throughout the academic year. They also have a collection of over 1000 books relevant to Gender Studies, which students may check out with their George Mason ID card.

You can learn about the Women and Gender Studies Program and Center at: <http://www.gmu.edu/acadexcel/findex.html>

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Syllabus—Subject to Change

Week 1: Introduction

W Jan. 25 Introductions, course overview

Week 2: Thinking Sexuality Transnationally

W Feb. 1 Elizabeth Povinelli and George Chauncey (1999), “Thinking Sexuality Transnationally” **(Blackboard)**

Martin F. Manalansan (1995), “In the Shadows of Stonewall: Examining Gay Transnational Politics and the Diasporic Dilemma” **(Blackboard)**

Joseph Massad (2002), “Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World” **(Blackboard)**

Katie King (2002), “There Are No Lesbians Here: Feminisms, Lesbianisms, and Global Gay Formations” **(Blackboard)**

Clare Hemmings (2007), “What’s in a Name? Bisexuality, Transnational Sexuality Studies and Western Colonial Legacies” **(Blackboard)**

In class discussion: *Dangerous Living: Coming Out in the Developing World* (John Scagliotti, 2003) [available on Kanopy]

Week 3: Poststructuralist Feminism and Queer Theory

- W Feb. 8 Judith Butler (1990), “Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire” **(Blackboard)**
- Judith Butler (1991), “Imitation and Gender Insubordination” **(Blackboard)**
- Biddy Martin (1994), “Sexualities without Genders and Other Queer Utopias” **(Blackboard)**
- Clare Hemmings (2002), “Bisexual Landscapes” **(Blackboard)**

Week 4: Queer Theory, Performativity, and Popular Culture

- W Feb. 15 Judith Butler (1993), “Gender is Burning: Questions of Appropriation and Subversion” **(Blackboard)**
- Jay Prosser (1998), “Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender and the Transsubstantiation of Sex” **(Blackboard)**
- bell hooks (1994), “Is Paris Burning?” **(Blackboard)**
- In class discussion: *Paris is Burning* (Jennie Livingston, 1991)
[Available on Amazon Prime]

Week 5: Transgender and Intersex Theory

- W Feb. 22 Judith Butler (2004), “Undiagnosing Gender” **(Blackboard)**
- Judith Butler (2004), “Doing Justice to Someone: Sex Reassignment and Allegories of Transsexuality” **(Blackboard)**
- David Rubin (2012), “An Unnamed Blank that Craved a Name: A Genealogy of Intersex as Gender” **(Blackboard)**
- Katrina Roen (2001), “Transgender Theory and Embodiment: The Risk of Racial Marginalization” **(Blackboard)**

Week 6: Queer Disability Theory

- W March 1 Alison Kafer (2003), “Compulsory Bodies: Reflections on Heterosexuality and Able-Bodiedness” **(Blackboard)**
- Robert McRuer (2006), “Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence” **(Blackboard)**

Ellen Samuels (2003), “My Body, My Closet: Invisible Disability and the Limits of Coming-Out Discourse” **(Blackboard)**

Eunjung Kim (2011), “Asexuality in Disability Narratives” **(Blackboard)**

Brenda Brueggemann and Debra Modellmog (2002), “Coming Out Pedagogy: Risking Identity in Language and Literature Classrooms” **(Blackboard)**

In class discussion: *(A)Sexual* (Angela Tucker, 2011)
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=11GGzOGIJnk>

Week 7: Queer of Color Critique

W March 8

Cathy Cohen (1997), “Punks, Bulldaggers and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics?” **(Blackboard)**

Roderick Ferguson (2004), “Queer of Color Critique, Historical Materialism, and Canonical Sociology” **(Blackboard)**

Alison Reed (2016), “The Whiter the Bread, the Quicker You’re Dead: Spectacular Absence and Post-Racialized Blackness in (White) Queer Theory” **(Blackboard)**

Kara Keeling (2009), “Looking for M: Queer Temporality, Black Political Possibility, and Poetry from the Future” **(Blackboard)**

In class discussion: *The Aggressives* (Daniel Peddle, 2005)
[Available for rent on Amazon]

Week 8: Transnational Queer of Color Critique

W March 22

Jasbir K. Puar (2007), *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham and London: Duke University Press):

- “Preface: Tactics, Strategies, Logistics” (Puar, ix-xxviii)
- “Introduction: Homonationalism and Biopolitics” (Puar, 1-36)
- “The Sexuality of Terrorism” (Puar, 37-78)
- “Abu Ghraib and U.S. Sexual Exceptionalism” (Puar, 79-113)
- “Intimate Control, Infinite Detention: Rereading the *Lawrence* Case” (Puar, 114-165)

Week 9: Queer Migration and Border Crossing

- W March 29 Eithne Luibhéid (2008), “Queer/Migration: An Unruly Body of Scholarship” **(Blackboard)**
- Eithne Luibheid (2002), “Looking Like a Lesbian: Sexual Monitoring at the U.S.-Mexico Border” **(Blackboard)**
- Carlos Decena (2008), “Tacit Subjects” **(Blackboard)**
- Katie Acosta (2008), “Lesbianas in the Borderlands: Shifting Identities and Imagined Communities” **(Blackboard)**
- Katie Acosta (2011), “The Language of (In)Visibility: Using In-Between Spaces as a Vehicle for Empowerment in the Family” **(Blackboard)**

Week 10: Black/Queer/Diaspora

- W April 5 Jafari Allen (2012), “Black/Queer/Diaspora at the Current Conjecture” (2012)
- Lyndon Hill (2012), “Chatting Back an Epidemic: Caribbean Gay Men, HIV/AIDS, and the Uses of Erotic Subjectivity” **(Blackboard)**
- Vanessa Agard-Jones (2012), “What the Sands Remember” **(Blackboard)**
- Xavier Livermon (2012), “Queer(y)ing Freedom: Black Queer Visibilities in Postapartheid South Africa” **(Blackboard)**
- Agatha Agathangelou (2013), “Neoliberal Geopolitical Order and World Value: Queerness as a Speculative Economy and Anti-Blackness as Terror” **(Blackboard)**

Week 11: Trans* Queer of Color Critique

- W April 12 Jian Neo Chen (2019), *Trans Exploits: Trans of Color Cultures and Technologies of Movement* [Read Introduction, Chapters 1, 3, 4 & Conclusion]

Week 12: Poor Queer Studies

- W April 19 Matt Brim (2020), *Poor Queer Studies: Confronting Elitism in the University* [Read Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 4 & Epilogue]

Week 13: Final Research Paper Presentations

W April 26 Graduate Final Research Paper Presentations

Week 14: Final Research Paper Presentations

W May 3 Undergraduate Final Research Paper Presentations

W May 10 Final Paper due via email at 11:59pm EST