

**AMST 521: CRITICAL STUDIES IN SEXUALITY
POST-MILLENNIUM QUEER THEORIES**

Instructor: Nishant Shahani

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Mondays, 1.10 – 4.

Location: TERR 24

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COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

In “The Marriage Moment,” (The Advocate, 1998), conservative gay Republican Andrew Sullivan argues that queers need to move beyond the “facile celebration of our woundedness”— more specifically, he expresses disdain for those queers who “pretend that somehow this is 1957 and straight America is initiating a Kulturkampf against sex in the parks and that somehow this is the defining issue of our times.” Insisting that queers should move beyond their attachment to the past, Sullivan suggests that it is the institution of marriage that will “liberate us from the shackles of marginalization and pathology.” In one of the most dangerous manifestations of a politics of fulfillment, Sullivan declares that the worst of the AIDS crisis has ended – the “obituary pages” have dwindled and that gays are ready to enter a phase of mature adulthood that is synonymous with the marriage moment. Sullivan not only erases the material reality of HIV and AIDS as a continuing problem, but he also erases the traumatic after-effects (and affects) of those who experienced state neglect and family abandonment during the AIDS crisis. Sarah Schulman has called this erasure the “gentrification of the mind”—creating “a system by which people who don’t matter are replaced by people who do- and then are pretended away.” Gay marriage thus replaces AIDS in Sullivan’s linear version of history—it becomes a quick fix solution to grapple with the wounds of history.

In this class, we will attempt to formulate a queer theory informed discourse that poses a challenge to Andrew Sullivan’s linear understanding of history and politics. If some of the central theoretical conversations that marked the beginning of queer studies in the early 90s were pre-occupied with debates surrounding the politics of performativity and materiality, the epistemological terrain has arguably shifted recently to more self-reflexive questions about what makes queer theory still queer. Given the assimilationist pragmatism of gay marriage/gays in the military activism, the embrace of a neo-liberal right to privacy model of sexual citizenship by mainstream gay organizations, and the rise of what Lisa Duggan has called the ideology of “homonormativity,” the future for queers might not look very...well, queer. In this class, we will analyze theoretical and political models that attempt to pose alternative political futures to the myopias of the present.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) **Weekly Response Papers:** (10% of final grade) You must write 2 page (minimum) responses to any specific aspect of the reading. Response papers must not summarize arguments, but offer critical commentary on a very specific aspect of the reading. Response papers could offer theoretically informed critiques or engaged analyses of the theoretical and political implications of the readings.

2) **Class Participation:** (20% of final grade) You must come to class prepared to engage in a discussion of the readings that have been assigned. Discussions must be grounded in an analysis of the readings rather than merely tangential. Since the class will be conducted seminar-style, you will be responsible for bringing a set of questions for the discussion that displays a thorough engagement with the readings provided. Completing the assigned reading is an axiomatic requirement for this class. Thorough engagement is expected in keeping with graduate work requirements.

3) **Oral Presentation:** (10% of final grade) You must pick a reading and will be in charge of introducing the frameworks and key definitions of that reading during the week it is assigned. Presentations must be no longer than 15 minutes. In addition to encapsulating the key arguments of the reading, you will be expected to analyze the theoretical and political implications of the reading under consideration. End your presentation by posing 3 questions to the class for discussion. In other words, I want your presentations to frame the class discussions of the assigned reading.

4) **Scholarly Paper** (50% of final grade) You will write an article length (20-25 pages) paper that draws on the theoretical materials discussed in class. The paper must have a theoretical argument that draws on but also advances or re-thinks existing queer studies scholarship in an original way. All papers must have appropriate citations and notes (Use MLA or Chicago Manual Style).

5) **Final Presentation** (10% of final grade) At the end of the semester, you will be expected to present papers in front of the class in the style of a conference format. After papers are presented, you will also respond to questions about your ideas.

CLASS POLICIES

1. Attendance:

Attendance is compulsory. Please arrive to class on time. You are allowed only one absence for the entire semester for a genuine emergency. After one absence, your grade will drop an entire letter for every subsequent absence.

2. Academic Integrity Policy:

Plagiarism or cheating of any kind on any assignment will not be tolerated and will result in a failing grade for the assignment **as well as the entire course** and a report to Student Affairs. See the WSU handbook on academic dishonesty (WAS 504-25-025) for further details and if you are at any time unclear about what constitutes plagiarism, or cheating, please see me. For specifics regarding academic dishonesty, please see -- <http://conduct.wsu.edu/AI>

3. Disability Accommodation:

Reasonable accommodations are available for students who have documented disability. Please notify me during the first week of class if any accommodations are needed for the course. Late notification may cause the requested accommodations to be unavailable. All accommodations must be approved through the Disability Resource Center (DRG) in Administration Annex 205, 335-1566.

4. Technology:

Please turn off cellular phones/blackberries/I phones during class. Please inform me if you plan to use a laptop to take notes.

5. Incomplete Policy:

No incompletes. All assignments must be submitted by due dates specified.

6. Campus Safety:

In the interest of campus safety and emergency procedures, please become familiar with the information on the WSU-provided websites:

<http://safetyplan.wsu.edu/>

<http://alert.wsu.edu/>

READINGS:

1. Course Packet (Available at Cougar Copies)
2. *Respectably Queer: Diversity Culture in LGBT Activist Organizations* – Jane Ward
3. *Ties that Bind: Familial Homophobia and its Consequences* – Sarah Schulman

(Note: Please buy your books online or order books from any bookstore of your choice. Note the dates in the schedule on which we will discuss the books. Please purchase books in advance of those dates.)

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Jan 10 – Introductions and Defining Terms

- Introductions
- Lisa Duggan, “Equality, Inc.” from *The Twilight of Equality*

Week 2: Jan 17

University Holiday (Martin Luther King Jr. Day)

Week 3: Jan 24 – Homonormativity and Sexual Citizenship

- David Eng, “The Law of Kinship: Lawrence v. Texas and the Emergence of Queer Liberalism” from *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*
- Jasbir Puar, “Homonationalism and Biopolitics”
- Jasbir Puar “Intimate Control, Infinite Detention”
- “The Sexuality of Terrorism” (all from *Terrorist Assemblages*)
- Lauren Berlant, “Live Sex Acts” from *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*

Week 4: Jan 31 – Queer theory, Gender, and Feminism

- Tucker Culbertson and Jack Jackson, “Proper Objects, Different Subjects and Juridical Horizons in Radical Legal Critique” from *Feminist and Queer Legal Theory*
- Gayle Salamon, “Transfeminism and the Future of Gender” from *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*
- Judith Halberstam, “Transgender Butch: Butch/FTM Border Wars and the Masculine Continuum” from *Female Masculinity*
- Judith Butler, “Against Proper Objects” from *Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*

Week 5: Feb 7 – Queer Affect

- Heather Love, “Introduction,”
- Heather Love, “Emotional Rescue,”
- Heather Love “The Politics of Refusal” (all from *Feeling Backwards*)
- Sara Ahmed, “Why Happiness, Why Now?”
- Sara Ahmed, “Unhappy Queers” (all from *The Promise of Happiness*)
- Sara Ahmed, “Find your Way” from *Queer Phenomenology*
- Ann Cvetkovich, “Introduction”
- Ann Cvetkovich, “The Everyday Life of Queer Trauma (from *An Archive of Feelings*)

Week 6: Feb 14 – Re-Claiming Shame

- Kathryn Bond Stockton, “Embracing Shame: ‘Black’ and ‘Queer’ in Debasement”
- Kathryn Bond Stockton, “When are Dirty Details and Scenes Compelling? Tucked in the Cuts of Interracial Anal Rape” (both from *Beautiful Bottom, Beautiful Shame: When ‘Black’ Meets ‘Queer’*)
- David Caron, “Shame on Me, or the Naked Truth about me and Marlene Dietrich” from *Gay Shame*
- Judith Halberstam, “Shame and White Gay Masculinity” from *Social Text* 84-85

Week 7: Feb 21

University Holiday (President’s Day)

Week 8: Feb 28 – Schulman’s America

- *Ties that Bind* – Sarah Schulman
- Selections from *Gentrification of the Mind*

Week 9: March 7 – Queer Activism in an age of Neo-Liberalism

- *Respectably Queer: Diversity Culture in LGBT Activist Organizations* – Jane Ward

Week 10: March 14

Holiday: Spring Break

Week 11: March 21 – Queering Childhood

- Kathryn Bond Stockton, “Growing Sideways, or Why Children Appear to Get Queerer in the Twentieth Century”
- Kathryn Bond Stockton, “Money is the Child’s Queer Ride: Sexing and Racing around the Future” (both from *The Queer Child*)
- Eve Sedgwick, “How to Bring up your Kids Gay” from *Tendencies*
- Katrina Roen, “Clinical Intervention and Embodied Subjectivity: Atypically Sexed Children and their Parents” from *Critical Intersex*
- Judith Halberstam, “On Bondage up Yours! Female Masculinity and the Tomboy” from *Curiouser*

Week 12: March 28 – Theories of Queer Futurity and Reparation

- Jose Esteban Munoz, “Feeling Utopia,”
- Jose Esteban Munoz, “Queerness as Horizon” (both from *Cruising Utopia*)
- Lee Edelman, “The Future is Kid’s Stuff” from *No Future*
- Round table: “The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory” from *PMLA*
- Eve Sedgwick, “Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, or, You’re so Paranoid, you probably Think this Essay is about you” from *Touching, Feeling*

Week 13: April 4 – Queer Temporality

- Iaian Morland, “What can Queer theory do for Intersex?” from *GLQ*
- Judith Halberstam, “Queer Temporalities and Postmodern Geographies” from *In a Queer Time and Place*
- Elizabeth Freeman, Selections from *Time Binds*

Week 14: April 11— Queer Theory and Pedagogy within a Corporate University

- Deborah Britzman, “Is there a Queer Pedagogy, or, Stop Reading Straight” from *Educational Theory*
- Kim Emery, “The New Normal” (unpublished manuscript)
- Cary Nelson, “Graduate Employee Unionization and the Future of Academic Labor”
- Cary Nelson, “What is Academic Freedom?” (both from *No University is an Island*)

- Nishant Shahani, "Pedagogical Practices and the Reparative Performance of Failure, or, What does [Queer] Knowledge do?" from *JAC*

Week 15: April 18 – Theorizing Sex

- Elizabeth F. Emens, "Compulsory Monogamy and Polyamorous Existence" from *Feminist and Queer Legal Theory*
- Michael Warner, "Zoning out Sex"
- Michael Warner, "The Politics of Shame and HIV Prevention" (both from *The Trouble with Normal*)
- Kobena Mercer, "Reading Radical Fetishism: The Photographs of Robert Mapplethorpe" from *Fetishism as Cultural Discourse*
- Pat Califia, "Feminism and Sadomasochism" from *Public Sex*

Week 16: April 25

Presentations