

American Studies 521

CRITICAL STUDIES IN SEXUALITY: Queer Theory and Critical Cultural Studies

Instructor: Nishant Shahani

Fall 2012

Mondays, 1.10 – 4.

Location: COLL 235

Office: Wilson 10 E

Office Hours: Mon, 11-1 (and by appointment)

Email: nshahani3@wsu.edu

COURSE DESCRIPTION AND OBJECTIVES

In “Queer and Then,” his 2012 piece in the *Chronicle Review* on the state of queer studies, Michael Warner takes stock of recent events – the passing of Eve Sedgwick, the closing of Series Q by Duke University Press—to ask about the continuing relevance of “queer” as a conceptual category. On the one hand, Warner’s tone of retrospective nostalgia, ostensibly gestures to a post-queer moment, even asking if we have reached “the end” of queer theory;” on the other hand, the essay is also a recognition of the elasticity of “queer” – that it has developed into different branches and under different theoretical and political rubrics that resist simple synthesis. In this class, we will begin to examine some of the theoretical terrain that “queer” has traveled under and morphed into—its intersections with critical race theory, gender studies, postcolonial critique, globalization studies and political economy theory. In some ways, the class will use queer theory as an entry point into critical and cultural studies in general. We will begin with the assumption that if “queer” is a floating signifier, it signifies nonetheless, and that such a signification always has material and performative dimensions in political contexts ranging from immigration law and health care to popular culture and the corporatization of the university.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS:

1) **Weekly Response Papers:** (10% of final grade) You must write 2-3 page 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 critiques or engaged analyses of the theoretical and political implications of the readings. You could make connections to other texts or cultural sites, or draw attention to political applications and implications of the reading.

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. The class will be conducted seminar-style, so you will be responsible for bringing in a set of questions for the discussion that displays a thorough engagement with the readings. 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. You do not need to write a response paper during the week of your presentation. If you choose a book, you can focus on two chapters of the book. If you don't choose a book, you must pick 2 essays from one week.

4) **Scholarly Paper** (50% of final grade) You will write an article length (18-20 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. Your presentations should be no longer than 15 minutes. After papers are presented, you will also respond to questions from the rest of the class about your ideas.

CLASS POLICIES

1. Attendance:

Attendance is compulsory. Please do not arrive to class late and do not leave early—both are distracting to the rest of the class. 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 phones during class. Please inform me if you plan to use a laptop to take notes.

5. Incomplete Policy:

I prefer not to give incompletes. All assignments must be submitted by due dates specified.

6. Emergency Notification System: WSU has made an **emergency notification system** available for faculty, students and staff. Please register at myWSU with emergency contact information (cell, email, text, etc). You may have been prompted to complete emergency contact information when registering for classes on RONet. Please refer to the University emergency management website <http://oem.wsu.edu/emergencies> as well WSU ALERT <http://alert.wsu.edu> for information on WSU's communication resources WSU will use to provide warning and notification for emergencies. The entire WSU safety plan can be found at <http://safetyplan.wsu.edu>.

READINGS: (Course Packet available at Cougar Copies, books available at Bookie)

1. *Cruising Utopia* – José Esteban Muñoz
2. *The Queer Art of Failure* – Judith (Jack) Halberstam
3. *Queer Latinidad* – Juana Maria Rodriguez
4. *Normal Life* – Dean Spade
5. Course Packet

Readings in Course Packet for AMST 521

1. Lee Edelman, "The Future is Kid Stuff," from *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*.
2. Lisa Duggan, "Equality, Inc." from *The Twilight of Equality*
3. Michael Warner, "Beyond Gay Marriage" from *The Trouble with Normal*
4. 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*
5. Chandan Reddy, "Freedom's Amendments: Race, Sexuality, and Disposability under the State Form" from *Freedom with Violence*
6. Chandan Reddy, "Rights-Based Freedom with Violence: Immigration, Sexuality, and the Subject of Human Rights" from *Freedom with Violence*
7. Chandan Reddy, "Moving Beyond a Freedom with Violence: The Politics of Gay Marriage in the Era of Racial Transformation" from *Freedom with Violence*
8. Aeyal Gross, "Israeli GLBT Politics between Queerness and Homonationalism"
9. Sarah Schulman, "Making Record from Memory," "The Dynamics of Death and Replacement," and "The Gentrification of AIDS" from *The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination*
10. Christopher Reed and Christopher Castiglia, "The Revolution Might be Televised: the Mass Mediation of Gay Memories" from *If Memory Serves*
11. Michael Warner, "Zoning out Sex" from *The Trouble with Normal*
12. Alexandra Juhasz, "Video Remains"
13. Chris Finley, "Decolonizing the Queer Native Body"
14. Roderick Ferguson, "Sissies on a Picnic"

15. Ismat Chughtai, "The Quilt"
16. Gayatri Gopinath, "Local Sites/Global Contexts: The Transnational Trajectories of *Fire* and 'The Quilt'"
17. Sarah Schulman, Selections from *Ties that Bind*
18. Roger Lancaster, "The Magical Power of Accusation" from *Sex Panic*
19. Robert McRuer, "Capitalism and Disabled Identity: Sharon Kowalski, Interdependency, and Queer Domesticity" from *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability*
20. Leslie Feinberg, Selections from *Stone Butch Blues*
21. Alisa Solomon, "Christina Madrazo's All-American Story," from *Queer Migrations*
22. Gayle Salamon, "Transfeminism and the Future of Gender" from *Assuming a Body: Transgender and Rhetorics of Materiality*
23. Julia Cerrano, "Dismantling Cissexual Privilege," from *Whipping Girl*
24. Cheryl Chase, "Hermaphrodites with Attitude" from *The Transgender Studies Reader*
25. Katrina Roen, "Clinical Intervention and Embodied Subjectivity: Atypically Sexed Children and their Parents" from *Critical Intersex*
26. Iaian Morland, "What can Queer theory do for Intersex?" from *GLQ*

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE

(Note: You are expected to have read the assignments *by* the date indicated on the schedule. Come to class prepared with commentary and notes for the day's reading. I reserve the right to make changes, which I will announce in advance.)

Week 1: Introductions

M Aug 20

Week 2: Critical Utopianism

M Aug 27

* José Esteban Muñoz, *Cruising Utopia*

Week 3:

M Sept 3 – Labor Day – HOLIDAY

Week 4: Theorizing Queer Negativity

M Sept 10

* Lee Edelman, "The Future is Kid Stuff"

* Judith Halberstam, *The Queer Art of Failure*

Week 5: Critiques of Queer Neo-Liberalism and Homonormativity

M Sept 17

* Lisa Duggan, "Equality Inc"

* Michael Warner, "Beyond Gay Marriage"

* David Eng, "The Law of Kinship: Lawrence v. Texas and the Emergence of Queer Liberalism"

Week 6: Queering the Color Line

M Sept 24

* Juana Maria Rodriguez, *Queer Latinidad*

Week 7: Ethnic Studies and Queer Theory

M Oct 1

*Chandan Reddy, "Freedom's Amendments: Race, Sexuality, and Disposability under the State Form"

* Chandan Reddy, "Rights-Based Freedom with Violence: Immigration, Sexuality, and the Subject of Human Rights"

*Chandan Reddy, "Moving Beyond a Freedom with Violence: The Politics of Gay Marriage in the Era of Racial Transformation"

*Aeyal Gross, "Israeli GLBT Politics between Queerness and Homonationalism"

Week 8: The Politics of Queer Memory

M Oct 8 –

* Sarah Schulman, "Making Record from Memory"

* Sarah Schulman, "The Dynamics of Death and Replacement,"

* Sarah Schulman "The Gentrification of AIDS"

* Christopher Reed and Christopher Castiglia, "The Revolution Might be Televised: the Mass Mediation of Gay Memories"

* Michael Warner, "Zoning out Sex"

* Alexandra Juhasz, "Video Remains"

Week 9: Critical Trans Politics

M Oct 15

* Dean Spade, *Normal Life*

Week 10: Re-thinking Queer Visibility, Re-thinking Queer Whiteness

M Oct 22

* Chris Finley, "Decolonizing the Queer Native Body"

* Roderick Ferguson, "Sissies on a Picnic"

* Ismat Chughtai, "The Quilt"

* Gayatri Gopinath, "Local Sites/Global Contexts: The Transnational Trajectories of *Fire* and 'The Quilt'"

* Watch *Fire*, Dir: Deepa Mehta (on course reserve)

Week 11: Queer Kinship and its Others

M Oct 29

- * Sarah Schulman, Selections from *Ties that Bind*
- * Roger Lancaster, "The Magical Power of Accusation" from *Sex Panic*
- * Michael Cobb, Selections from *Single: Arguments for the Uncoupled* (not in current course packet. Will be made available during the semester)
- * Watch *Paris is Burning*, Dir: Jennie Livingstone (on course reserve)

Week 12: The Personal and the Political

M Nov 5

- * Roger Lancaster, "The Magical Power of Accusation" from *Sex Panic*
- * Robert McRuer, "Capitalism and Disabled Identity: Sharon Kowalski, Interdependency, and Queer Domesticity"
- * Leslie Feinberg, Selections from *Stone Butch Blues*
- * Alisa Solomon, "Christina Madrazo's All-American Story"

Week 13: Veterans Day -- Holiday

M Nov 12

Week 14 – Thanksgiving Week -- Holiday

M Nov 19

Week 15: The Future of Gender Studies

M Nov 26

- * Gayle Salamon, "Transfeminism and the Future of Gender"
- * Julia Cerrano, "Dismantling Cissexual Privilege,"
- * Cheryl Chase, "Hermaphrodites with Attitude"
- * Katrina Roen, "Clinical Intervention and Embodied Subjectivity: Atypically Sexed Children and their Parents"
- * Iaian Morland, "What can Queer theory do for Intersex?"

Week 16

M Dec 3 – Presentations

Final papers due on December 10.