

Gender Studies 328: Queer Studies
Professor Melissa M. Wilcox
MW 1:00-2:20, Olin 155
Whitman College
Fall 2012

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Office hours: M 3:00-4:30, Th 10:30-12:00
(If you can't make these times, see me for an appointment)

Course description: Queer studies, in the guise of queer theory, developed in the early 1990s out of the conjunction of feminist theory, sexuality studies, and queer activism. This course introduces students to some of the key authors and texts in queer theory, as well as the next generation of works that brought about the establishment of queer studies as a field. It is recommended that students who take this class have previous college-level exposure to theoretical writing in either the humanities or the social sciences. This course fulfills the Alternative Voices/Cultural Pluralism requirement.

Required texts:

- Foucault, Michel. *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1: An Introduction*. New York: Vintage Books, 1990.
- Muñoz, José Esteban. *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Halberstam, Judith. *The Queer Art of Failure*. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Puar, Jasbir. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007.
- Huffer, Lynne. *Mad for Foucault: Rethinking the Foundations of Queer Theory*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.

All books will be on reserve in Penrose, and you're also welcome to share books with a classmate in order to keep your expenses down.

Course requirements:

Final grades in this course will be calculated as follows:

Reflection papers (2 @ 15%).....	30%
Application papers (2 @ 15%).....	30%
Outlines.....	15%
Final paper.....	25%

Remember to keep all papers I return to you in case there are any discrepancies at the end of the semester. If you keep your papers, you can also track your own grade!

Reflection papers: For two of the books we cover this semester (you choose which two), you will need to write a 4- to 5-page reflection paper. In this paper, reflect on and critique (i.e., thoughtfully evaluate) the book, in whole or in part. You may address the overall argument, a chapter, or even a single passage of the book. Please indicate at the top of the paper that you're writing a reflection paper.

Application papers: For two of the books we cover this semester (you choose which two, but they must not be books you've addressed in your reflection papers), you will need to write a 4- to 5-page application paper. In this paper, apply the ideas from the book to an analysis of something else: a literary work, film, political agenda or strategy, legal case, performance, art work, organization, or anything else you can think of. As with the reflection papers, you don't have to try to cover the whole book: you can focus on the overall argument or one specific aspect. Please indicate at the top of the paper that you're writing an application paper.

Outlines: For each reading assignment in this class, beginning with Foucault, you are required to turn in a short outline of the assigned reading. We will go over these at the beginning of class, in order better to comprehend the author's argument. No discussion or critique is possible without first understanding what the author is saying! Your outlines will count as your preparation and participation grade for this course. They may be typewritten or handwritten (as long as your writing is legible!), and must be turned in during class in hard copy.

Final paper: Your final assignment for this class is a 10- to 12-page queer analysis of *something*. You may draw on any of the books we've read in class for theoretical inspiration; you may also use other queer theorists or other books and articles by the authors we've read. But the core of your paper should be the queer reading of anything you can think of to look at from a queer perspective. You may want to make this paper an expansion of one of your application papers, or you may want to focus on something else entirely. Come see me in office hours if you need ideas to get you started. Final projects are due in your CLEo inbox by **2:00 p.m. on Thursday, December 13.**

Course policies:

Students with disabilities: If you have a disability and need my help in making this course fully accessible to you, please feel free to contact me, either in person or through the Academic Resources Center (527-5213). I'll be happy to help in whatever way I can. If you suspect you have a learning difference but have not had your suspicions confirmed, the Academic Resource Center can help you to identify that difference and figure out how to adjust your learning style accordingly. *The only thing wrong with a learning difference is an inflexible education system.*

Inclusive language: Inclusive language is the use of accurate and unbiased gender terminology, and it is required in every assignment you complete for this course. There isn't room in this syllabus to go into the evidence for the importance of inclusive language, but the simple explanation is that language shapes how people think. When religious studies was considered to be the study of the beliefs of *man*, for instance, people (usually male scholars) tended to study male writers, male believers, male religious leaders, and so on simply because it didn't occur to them to study women as well. As a result, they had a less accurate understanding of religion than we have today. "Humanity" and "humans" are gender-inclusive terms; "man" and "men" are not.

Non-inclusive language also can be misleading, inaccurate, or vague. Traditional formal English, for example, requires that you use the singular pronoun "he" as a generic pronoun. Thus, you might write: "when a new member is initiated into the secret society, he must undergo several hours of ordeals." People who read that sentence are left wondering whether "he" includes women or whether this secret society is for men only. The solution? When you use singular generic terms (like "one," "anyone," "a person," etc.), use the combined pronoun "she or he." Or, for a less awkward sentence, simply use a plural noun ("people," "initiates," "members," etc.), because English has a non-gendered plural pronoun ("they").

Don't forget that inclusive language can also include sexuality – by the end of the first month of classes you'll know the term "heteronormativity" and how to avoid it in your writing.

I am always happy to help you find more inclusive language for what you want to say – see me in office hours if you'd like assistance with this.

Late fees: For the essays, five percentage points will be deducted for each day the assignment is late (yes, this includes weekends and holidays). There will be no make-ups for the group project or the final exam unless you make arrangements with me in advance.

Academic dishonesty: Honesty is an integral part of academic learning; any form of cheating expresses gross disrespect for the efforts of your teachers, the hard work of your classmates, and your own privilege in having access to a quality education. I will not hesitate to report and pursue incidents of suspected academic dishonesty, including cheating on tests, copying others' assignments, and plagiarism. **The maximum penalty for academic dishonesty is permanent expulsion from Whitman.**

This class is an educational safe zone. It welcomes and respects the viewpoints of students of all sexual orientations and genders as well as all races, ethnicities, religions, and abilities. All members of this learning community are expected to treat each other with respect and dignity, and to listen especially carefully to the voices of culturally and socially disempowered groups.

Course Schedule

→ Watch for the arrows! They tell you when an assignment is due.

Part 1: Beginnings and Forerunners

Wednesday, 8/29: Introducing queer theory

Read: De Lauretis

Monday, 9/3: Camp

Read: Syllabus; Sontag (on CLEo)

Film: *Paris is Burning* (dir. Jennie Livingston, 1990, 77 min.)

Wednesday, 9/5: Drag cultures

Read: Newton (on CLEo)

Monday, 9/10: The repressive hypothesis

Read: Foucault Parts 1 and 2

→ **First outline due**

Wednesday, 9/12: The social construction of sex

Read: Foucault pp. 53-91

Monday, 9/17: Sex and power

Read: Foucault pp. 92-131

Wednesday, 9/19: Bio-power

Read: Foucault Part 5, Butler (on CLEo)

Part 2: Queers of Color: Politics and Performance

Monday, 9/24: Race and Melancholy

Read: Halperin (on CLEo), Duggan (on CLEo), Muñoz Preface, Introduction

Film: *Looking for Langston* (dir. Isaac Julien, 1992, 45 min.)

Wednesday, 9/26: Mourning and anger

Read: Muñoz Chs. 2 and 4

Film: *The Transformation* (dir. Susana Aiken and Carlos Aparicio, 1995, 52 min.)

→ **Foucault paper due in CLEo drop box by 1:00 p.m.**

Monday, 10/1: Performance and resistance

Read: Muñoz Chs. 5 and 6

Wednesday, 10/3: Making new worlds

Read: Muñoz Chs. 7 and 8

Fall break 10/6-10/9!

Part 3: Genderqueer Performances

Wednesday, 10/10: Low theory, and deconstructing your childhood

Read: Halberstam Introduction, Ch. 1

Monday, 10/15: Is failure queer?

Read: Halberstam Chs. 2 and 3

→ **Muñoz paper due in CLEo drop box by 1:00 p.m.**

Wednesday, 10/17: Feminism, fascism, and more deconstructing your childhood

Read: Halberstam Chs. 4-6

I will be out of town this day – no class, but please write an outline to turn in on Monday.

Part 4: Queer Theory and Homonationalism

Monday, 10/22: Back – and forward – to biopolitics I (and finish discussing Halberstam)

Read: Puar Preface

Wednesday, 10/24: Biopolitics II

Read: Puar Introduction

Monday, 10/29: Terrorism and sex

Read: Puar Ch. 1

→ **Halberstam paper due in CLEo drop box by 1:00 p.m.**

Wednesday, 10/31: Sex and torture

Read: Puar Ch. 2

Monday, 11/5: Rethinking *Lawrence v. Texas*

Read: Puar Ch. 3

Wednesday, 11/7: Terrorist assemblages

Read: Puar Ch. 4, Conclusion

Part 5: Full Circle – Rethinking Foucault

Monday, 11/12: A Return to *Madness*

Read: Huffer Preface, Introduction

Wednesday, 11/14: Rethinking *The History of Sexuality*

Read: Huffer Ch. 1 and First Interlude

→ **Puar paper due in CLEo drop box by 1:00 p.m.**

NOVEMBER 17-25: THANKSGIVING BREAK!

Monday, 11/26: Madness and morality

Read: Huffer Ch. 2 and Second Interlude

Wednesday, 11/28: Foucault and psychoanalysis

Read: Huffer Ch. 3, Third Interlude

Monday, 12/3: Rameau's Nephew

Read: Huffer Ch. 4, Fourth Interlude

Wednesday, 12/5: A Foucauldian ethics

Read: Huffer Ch. 5, Postlude

Thursday, December 13: Final projects and Huffer paper due in CLEo drop box by 2:00 p.m.