

Syllabus

In recent years, the bedrock feminist innovation that separated gender from sex has come under scrutiny. "Theorizing Gender and Sexuality" challenges and expands our understanding of the relationship between biological sex, gendered identities, and sexual "preferences," practices, and life ways. This deeply interdisciplinary course engages students with complex debates about sex, gender, sexuality, and the body that push beyond binary models reliant on a simple "nature/culture" distinction. Focus is placed on the dynamic and variable aspects of sexuality, sex, and gender, within and across cultures, representational forms, and historical periods, analyzing the circumstances in which they undergo significant challenge or transformation. Particular paradigmatic "case studies" will be utilized in an attempt to push at the boundaries of both sex and gender and to invite dialogue about contesting conceptualizations of "the body," "sex," and "gender," particularly as they circulate in specific discourses of feminism and queer theory as well as poststructuralism, ethnic studies, critical race theory, literary theory, and cultural and narrative studies.

This is a reading-intensive, seminar-style discussion course. Students will be expected to complete all assigned readings, participate in leading group discussion (with a partner), write a short keyword paper, review at least 4 consecutive issues of one feminist journal, and write an individually shaped final paper, for which a schedule of proposal, revised proposal, and working bibliography will be required. Grading: discussion leading/keyword presentation (in pairs) 15%, short keyword/journal paper 25% (5 pp.), final paper 60% (20-30 pp.). Students will come into this course with a range of disciplinary emphases and interests and as scholars with expertise in multiple methods, and I hope to work collaboratively with each individual on his or her final project. I also want to make space for you to share relevant materials from your disciplines and research with one another, especially your research for the keyword/journal papers; hence, there is "tba" space in our blackboard readings for each of you to make one additional reading recommendation. Doing so will contribute (positively) to your grade. Criteria for assessing final papers will include: success in meeting the goals of each individual proposal (see prospectus process below); success in engaging one or more of the overarching themes of the course; the project's original contribution to issues raised in the course.

Understanding, assessing, and learning to take advantage of the peer review process is a key component of academic professionalization. Because women's, gender, and sexuality studies are such deeply interdisciplinary fields, issues of peer review can be particularly complex. The keyword/journal short paper assignment is designed to help focus your own analysis of peer-reviewed essays both across a range of journals in the field and through reading a set of consecutive issues of one journal in the field.

Keywords: gender, sex, perform, woman, queer identity, body, race, nation, feeling, family, narrative/story, desire, contract, feminism, activism, digital, global/international, public, lesbian, whiteness, color

Journals: *Differences*, *Feminist Studies*, *Frontiers*, *Genders*, *Gender & Society*, *GLQ*, *Hypatia*, *International Journal of Transgenderism*, *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, *Journal of International Women's Studies*, *Meridians*, *National Women's Studies Association Journal*, *Sexuality & Culture*, *Signs*, *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*

Books (all ordered at bookstore unless marked otherwise) (supplementary readings on blackboard)

Gender Trouble, Judith Butler

Bodies that Matter, Butler

My Gender Workbook, Kate Bornstein

Imagining Transgender, David Valentine

**Queer Theory/Gender Theory*, Riki Wilchins

Passing & Quicksand, Nella Larsen

Fun Home, Alison Bechdel

An Archive of Feelings, Ann Cvetkovich

Pedagogies of Crossing, Jacqui Alexander

Feminism Without Borders, Chandra Mohanty

Feminism Meets Queer Theory, ed. Elizabeth Weed & Naomi Schor

* *Rethinking Sex*, special issue of GLQ Vol. 17, No. 1(2011), ed. Heather Love – available via library

http://muse.jhu.edu.ezproxv.neu.edulournals/journal_of_lesbian_and_gay_studies/toc/qlq.17.1.html

Class 1 – Introductions

Michelle Goldberg, "What is a Woman?" *The New Yorker*

Class 2

Love, ed. *Rethinking Sex*

Bornstein, *My Gender Workbook* (either edition)

Butler/Rubin, "Sexual Traffic: Interview," in Weed

Blackboard: Gayle Rubin, "The Traffic in Women" and "Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality;" Joan Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis"

keyword and journal sign-ups

Class 3

Wilchins, *Queer Theory, Gender Theory*

Blackboard: "The Combahee River Collective Statement;" Wittig, "One is Not Born a Woman;" Irigaray, "This Sex Which is Not One;" Hartsock, "The Feminist Standpoint;" "African American Women in Defense of Ourselves;" Harding, "The Instability of the Analytical Categories of Feminist Theory;" Kimberle Crenshaw, "Black Women Still in Defense of Ourselves;" Rich, "Diving into the Wreck;" Walker, "In Search of our Mother's Gardens;" Kaplan, "Girlfriend;" Gilman, "The Yellow Wallpaper;" Glaspell, "A Jury of Her Peers"

Class 4

Weed, ed. *Feminism Meets Queer Theory*

Blackboard: Walters, "From Here to Queer;" special guest essay(s), tba

Class 5

Mohanty, *Feminism Without Borders*

Blackboard: King, "Producing Sex, Theory, and Culture: Gay/Straight Remappings in Contemporary

Feminism;" Kaplan and Grewal, "Transnational Practices and Interdisciplinary Feminist Scholarship: Refiguring Women's and Gender Studies;" special guest essay(s), tba

Class 6

Butler, *Gender Trouble*

Blackboard: Parker and Sedgwick, "Introduction: Performativity and Performance"

Class 7

Butler, *Gender Trouble*

Blackboard: Snitow, "A Gender Diary;" Butler, "Critically Queer," Halberstam, "Drag Kings: Masculinity and Performance," from *Female Masculinity*; special guest essay(s), tba

Paper #1 Due

Class 8

Larsen/Bechdel

Blackboard: *Sedgwick, "Epistemology of the Closet;" Walters, "The Closet," from The Tolerance Trap; Ruddick, "Thinking about Fathers;" Spillers, "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe"*

Class 9

Alexander

Blackboard: Wiegman, "The Progress of Gender: Whither 'Women?';" Grewal, "Women's Rights as Human Rights;" special guest essay(s), tba

First draft of final project prospectus due- one page.

Class 10

Butler, *Bodies that Matter*

Blackboard: from Solomon, *Assuming a Body: "What is a Body?;"* Frankenberg, "The Mirage of an Unmarked Whiteness"

Class 11

Valentine

Blackboard: "Transgender/Transsexual Roundtable;" special guest essay(s), tba

Second draft of final project prospectus due: 2 pp., plus 2 pp. annotated bibliography

Class 12

Cvetkovich (selections)

Blackboard: from Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity*; from Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: "Affective Subjects;"* Cvetkovich, "Public Feelings;" Sedgwick, *"Melanie Klein and the Difference Affect Makes"*

Class 13

Final presentations

All final papers/projects due, in electronic form via email to the instructor.

Note: Your paper must be a word doc. and your email should contain no other attachments. If receipt is not confirmed on Tuesday, do not assume that I have received your paper. Keep back-up copies of this and all work.

SAMPLE