

COMM 8980 /6910

Queer Theory
Syllabus

Fall 06

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Ofc hours: generally I'll be around Mon 1-4 and Tues 2-4 (and some Weds); but make appointments as these hours are also to deal with grad director issues.

Introductory notes (important):

Having spent a considerable amount of time this summer mapping out the syllabus to follow, I was myself amazed at the sheer volume of work in queer studies that has appeared in the last few years, let alone since its academic inception. Thus: this syllabus has gaps, untouched areas, and so on, which is going to be inevitable given this outpouring of diverse scholarship.

Which leads me to the important point: Given the ways in which queer theory is necessarily bound up with its practitioners' libidinal investments, the selections of readings that I have come up with will inevitably reflect my own to an extent. True, the foundational texts are almost all here. But beyond that, the readings most likely are skewed a bit in a 'gay-male' direction. Of course, I do believe that the issues raised in all these readings are applicable in contexts other than the gay-male one. However, you may find that your own libidinal investments in studying queer theory are not as reflected in the syllabus as you would like: and this is a real and legitimate issue in a course such as this.

Therefore, as a way to deal with this, I have incorporated many presentations into the schedule of classes. There is, for example, the "Show and Tell" week—and here my use of this phrase rather than the more customary "conference-style presentations" is precisely to acknowledge this element of libidinal investment (and political investment) inherent in the course—which will allow you to bring to the table issues of particular interest to you. And I want to encourage seminar participants from the start to be proactive in filling in any important gaps in the syllabus. To this end, any student who feels that certain articles not present on the syllabus should be discussed in a given week's topic should talk to me: I can then allow you to present the material as part of the session, or even to xerox off an additional essay for the group.

Point two: as with queerness itself, queer theory tends to dissolve all sorts of disciplinary boundaries and territorialities (which is why, I think, deconstruction and psychoanalysis have been such central discourses among many queer theorists). The student composition of this seminar reflects this: we have students from both MIS and public, as well as other departments like English.

Issues of visual culture and space, however, have been central to queer theory almost from the outset, and in this seminar there will be an ongoing engagement with visual culture, in the forms of films and television, advertising, comics, zines, photography, the web.

Books to get: [* indicates book is also on 3-day reserve in the library]

Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, vol. 1

D.A. Miller, *Bringing Out Roland Barthes*

Leo Bersani, *Homos*

Diana Fuss, *Inside/Out: Lesbian theories, gay theories*

Lee Edelman, *Homographesis*

*Henry Abelove, *Deep Gossip*

Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City*

Amy Villarejo, *Lesbian Rule*

*Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire*

Special issue *Social Text* 84/85: What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?

All articles not in above are on electronic reserve, password: RC8980BHW

Other books on reserve: Butler, *Bodies that Matter*; *The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader*; Dyer, *The Culture of Queers*;

Requirements:

* Attendance: This is a doctoral seminar. There are no excused absences. If you miss more than one session, your grade will be lowered. Needless to say, if you must miss a session, you should notify me in advance.

* Presentations: Each student will present a number of times. In general, presentations will be only 10 to 15 minutes max: and they will vary from presentations of one of the readings, to presentations of the film for discussion, to presentations of outside materials. When presenting readings, films, or outside materials, the presenter should strive to balance summarizing the material and eliciting seminar discussion of the material. Count on about five of these during the course of the semester.

[Additionally, as I noted earlier, any student may wish to present outside material s/he thinks important to expanding the scope of the discussions to other forms of queerness.]

*A book review (standard length, 7 double-spaced pages) of a recent book in queer theory. Guidelines later. You should probably select a book that will connect with your final project in some way.

*Final paper: A work of non-fiction, submitted in two stages: draft, approx 14 pages, final draft approx 18-20 pages.

I am keeping the description of the final project deliberately vague. This is intentional, given that conceptually, “queerness” is inherently decentered, hybridized, transgressive of boundaries. Certainly, it is true that queer theory is currently undergoing the same kind of institutionalization (if you will) that film studies underwent in the 70s; so that journals like GLQ will only publish what it deems scholarly according to the standards of academia. And certainly, some of you—perhaps all of you—will be working on a scholarly essay. But I want to leave room for leeway here (with the caveat that the final work be a non-fiction essay). And it should be noted that since I will grade the final essay, I will adopt standards appropriate to the genre you are writing in: if you are writing in the belle-lettristic tradition, then your writing style will be subject to close evaluation.

Topics: in terms of topics, you may work on theoretical questions, on “texts” [literary, visual, performance, safe sex advertising, erotic photography, etc.], on issues of space, on historical issues. Topics will be cleared with me before you embark on project.

The writing workshop: The first draft of the paper will be submitted to all members of the seminar on 11/27 (xeroxed copies). All seminar members will read all papers. On 12/4, we will have a writing workshop to go over all the papers, with constructive suggestions for revision.

Plagiarism and academic honesty:

Students are expected to properly document ideas taken from books, articles, internet, etc., and to indicate direct quotations. If you are uncertain of the conventions for documenting source material, you should talk to me; otherwise I will assume you are familiar with them. Plagiarism will result in failure of the assignment, and possible disciplinary action. For the university’s complete, official policy on academic integrity, visit the following link:

http://www2.gsu.edu/~wwwdos/codeofconduct_conpol.html

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Queer Theory
Schedule of seminar sessions

NB: This syllabus has changes from the one distributed last month via email.

NB: This course syllabus provides a general plan for the course. Deviations may be necessary.

8/21 Session 1: Queer theory in the academy

Butler, short statement on writing
Foucault, "Freud, Marx, Nietzsche"
Eve Sedgwick, "Queer and Now," from *Tendencies*
Berlant, Warner, "What Does Queer Theory teach us about X?"
Wiegman, "Queering the Academy"
D. Allen, "Lesbian and Gay Studies: A Consumer Guide"

I. Routes

8/28 S.2: Foucault

History of Sexuality, vol. 1
"Friendship as a Way of Life"
Eve Sedgwick, "Epidemics of the Will," [from *Tendencies*]

Presentations: Halperin, *Saint Foucault*
Viewing:

9/11 S.3: Not Just Roland Barthes

Selections from *A Lover's Discourse*
D.A. Miller, "Sontag's Urbanity"
Leo Bersani, *Homos*

Presentations: a/ Barthes, *A Lover's Discourse*;
b/ S/Z read through the lens of queerness, not narratology (and *Bringing out RB*)

Viewing: Fassbinder, *Querelle*

9/18 S.4: Foundational

Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Some Binarism" (intro to *Epistemology of the Closet*)
Judith Butler, intro and Chap 1, *Bodies That Matter* (book on reserve)
John d'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity"
Diana Fuss, Intro to *Inside/Out*

Presentations: On the above material
Viewing: Episodes of *Queer as Folk*, tba

II. Problematics of the Visible

9/25 S.5: Edelman, *Homographesis*

Presentations: D.A.Miller, "Anal Rope" [in Inside/Out]

Viewing: Preminger, *Laura*

10/2 S.6: Excavating the 50s

Corber, selections from *Homosexuality in Cold War America*

Abelove, chapters from *Deep Gossip*

Meyer, "Rock Hudson's Body" [in Inside/Out]

Auricchio, "Lifting the Veil"

Dyer, "Image of the Homosexual as Sad Young Man"

Presentations: from above material.

Viewing: Preminger, *Advise and Consent*

10/9 S.7: Publics, Counterpublics, Visual Culture

Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* [Intro, 1, 2, and 3]

Meyer, "Gay Power ca. 1970" [visual culture of Stonewall]

Goldman, "Golden Age of Gay Porn" [on von Gloeden]

Dean, "Phallacies of Dyke Comic Strips"

Danae Clark, "Commodity Lesbianism"

Presentations: von Gloeden? Comix? Photography? Zines?

Viewing:

10/16 S.8: Race

Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* [chap 6]

Kobena Mercer, "Mapplethorpe and Fantasies of Race"

Richard Meyer, "Robert Mapplethorpe and the Disciple of Photography"

Marriott, "Bordering On: the Black Penis"

Perez, "My Brown Body," in ST

Presentations: Dwight MacBride, *Why I Hate Abercrombie and Fitch*

Viewing: Riggs, *Tongues Untied*

III. Cultural space

10/23 S.9: Queer Space

from Bell, Valentine, *Mapping Desire*

Foucault, "Different Spaces"

Cante, "Pouring Out the Past" [I will have to hand this out separately]

Shah, "Policing Privacy..." in ST

Manalansan, "Spatial Politics in the Global City," in ST

Presentations: On above material
Viewing:

10/30 S.10 Queer Nations

Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City* [chaps 4-5]
Dyer, "Homosexuality and Heritage"

Presentations: Tsai, *The River*; something by Derek Jarman??
Viewing: maybe Visconti, *Death in Venice*; Wong, *Happy Together*;

11/6 S.11. Porn

Cante/Restivo, excerpts from the 3 essays [*Keyframes, Porn Studies, More Dirty Looks*]
maybe the essay in *porn studies* on the asian guy
Champagne, "Stop Reading Porn"
***Anything on Lesbian porn??? S&M performance???

Presentations: I will present some clips; other presentations tba
Viewing:

11/13 S.12. Show and Tell week

IV. Recent Developments

We can talk about whether or not to condense and combine the two sessions below so as to liberate the 11/20 day which is before Thanksgiving. I will leave the decision up to the seminar.

11/20 S. 13. Villarejo, *Lesbian Rule*

Tinkcom, excerpts from *Working Like a Homosexual*
Edelman, chap 3 of *No Future* (on *North by Northwest*)

11/27 S. 14. Deleuzian strands

Guy Hocquenghem, *Homosexual Desire* (excerpts)
selections from the *Rhizome* online issue, "the Becoming Deleuzo-Guattarian of Queer Theory"
Viewing: Rodriguez, *O Fantasma*

Turn in drafts of paper to all members of seminar.

12/4 S.15: Writing workshop