Queer Theory/Queer Lives WMST 250/SOC201B

DePauw University

Fall 2010

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Course Description: This course is an interdisciplinary exploration of: 1) the development of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) categories, identities and communities, 2) the emergence and development of Queer Theory and its ability to deconstruct, de-politicize, and extend beyond “LGBT,” and 3) applications and examples of Queer Theory.

Course Objectives:

* To explore LGBT experiences from multiple disciplinary perspectives.
* To identify and explain the limitations of “LGBT.”
* To identify, critique, and apply queer frameworks to systems of sex, gender and sexuality.
* To identify and critique interlocking systems of domination and control that affect queer lives, including sexism, racism, ethnicity and social class.
* To identify and critique social institutions and LGBT/Queer experiences within them, including families, marriage, law and the media.
* To consider one’s own location within systems of domination and the potential of creating social change from that location.
* To develop and utilize critical writing, discussion, and analytical skills.

Required Readings:

Bechdel, Alison. 2006. *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic.* New York: Mariner Books.

D’Emilio, John. 1998. *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities.* Chicago: University of Chicago.

Halberstam, Judith. 1998. *Female Masculinity.* Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

Savage, Dan. 2006. *The Commitment.* New York: Plume.

Weelan, Brett and Mickey Eliason. 1996. *Queer Studies: A Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and*

*Transgender Anthology.* New York: New York University Press. (QSAnth)

Assigned readings in Moodle. Noted on syllabus.

Requirements:

1. Daily Participation and Preparation (40 points): Class participation, which means active and thoughtful involvement in the class discussions and activities, is an important part of your grade. I expect that you will have completed the daily reading assignments. Good discussions depend on participants being prepared. Writing up your thoughts about the readings contributes to this process because you enter into the discussion with a clear idea of questions and comments you would like to raise. Therefore, you should be prepared to comment, critique, or raise questions about the readings.

To aid in class discussion, I have created a Diigo social bookmarking group for this course. We will find, post and comment on articles, videos and other internet resources that demonstrate course concepts and theories. The larger goal is that we will create a learning community where we share information and resources. Class members will be divided into five groups that will be responsible for posting relevant materials to Diigo before 8pm Monday and Wednesday evenings (i.e., before class). Everyone in the class is responsible for checking and responding to Diigo entries. Additional details and instructions about Diigo and will be discussed in class and posted on Moodle.

Short take-home participation assignments are due when you walk in the door. I will not accept fast-scrawl, handwritten write-ups thrown together while I collect the work of students who did their homework. Your Diigo participation and short writing assignments will be assessed on their critical insight and connection to course topics.

While you will have personal experiences that are relevant to the discussion, I want you to think about how your experiences can be understood in relation to the theoretical perspectives, social history, structures and processes we discuss. My goal is that you demonstrate critical thinking about sex, gender, sexuality, identity(ies), history and knowledge based on the readings.

2. Synthesizing Essays (30 points each): Critical thinking and writing are essential for your success in this course. You will be required to write two 5-6 page essays synthesizing the reading materials and class discussions. I will provide these assignments through Moodle.

3. Midterm Exam (30 points): There will be midterm take-home exam.

4. Friday Memos (10 points each): You are required to write seven memos discussing the week’s readings during the semester (2-3 typed pages each). Each week’s memo must be emailed to me (khall@depauw.edu) *before* *noon on Friday*; I will not accept late memos. You must complete at least three memos before Fall Break—I will not accept more than four memos after that point of the semester.

These memos need not be summaries of the week’s readings. In fact, memos that include reactions to specific arguments, comparisons between authors, or applications/connections to previous readings or everyday life outside this course will earn better scores. In short, be critical and insightful about what you discuss in your memos. Use and cite course readings correctly. Be creative. Don’t regurgitate.

5. Final Project (50 points): You will be required to complete a final project related to the course content. The format and topic of the final project will be fairly open and creative, ranging from a traditional research paper, a digital story, or a detailed conceptualization of your own comic book. Instructions for this assignment will be handed out in class.

Grading Scale: 94-100% = A 80-83 = B- 67-69 = D+ 90-93 = A- 77-79 = C+ 64-66 = D 87-89 = B+ 74-76 = C 60-63 = D- 84-86 = B 70-73 = C- 0-59 = F

Add it up: Participation 40

Synthesizing Essays (2 x 30) 60

Friday Memos (7 x 10) 70

Midterm Exam 30

Final Project 50 250 pointsGrading Criteria: These criteria apply to all writing assignments and correspond to the percentages above. A- to A: means that the piece successfully captured the main points of the readings and that they were connected to the assignment. The paper illustrates clear and relevant insights and understanding and shows that the writer thought carefully about what he or she was going to write. The paper is exceptionally thought-provoking, original, and lucid in content and organization. The paper has something to say, and says it clearly and gracefully to an appropriate audience; it is supported fully by sources and appropriate examples. This grade also indicates exceptional writing skills in terms of clarity, grammar, and punctuation. B- to B+: means that the piece accurately captured the main points of the readings and that they were connected to the assignment. The paper illustrates that the writer thought about the readings (and what they meant) and that he or she made an attempt to connect it to course concepts and issues. The paper is solid and well-organized but not striking; the writer has a definite point to make and makes it in an organized and competent way. This grade also demonstrates good writing skills in terms of clarity, grammar, and punctuation. C- to C+: means that the piece did not quite capture the main points of the readings accurately and/or didn’t attend carefully to the requirements of the assignment. It seems from the piece that the writer did not understand the readings and/or think carefully about linking it to course concepts and issues. The content and organization is weak, fuzzy, or illogical. Examples are given for their own sake or to demonstrate that the writer read the text, not to make a point. This grade may also indicate writing problems in terms of clarity, grammar, and punctuation. D- to D+: means that the paper shows blatant inaccuracies regarding the readings, the writer did not complete part of the assignment, and/or that writing problems impede my ability to understand the piece. The paper is much shorter than the assigned length and appears as though there isn’t a point to the paper. This grade may also indicate serious writing problems in terms of clarity, grammar, and punctuation. F: means that the paper is plagiarized in part or as a whole (see Academic Integrity Policy below), or it shows general weaknesses ever graver than those of a D paper.Course Policies: Consistent tardiness and unexcused absences will negatively affect your final grade. Excused absences must be discussed with me in advance, and that does not guarantee your absence will be excused. All writing assignments must be turned in on their announced due dates. Without a reasonable excuse discussed with me in advance, failure to turn in assignments on time will result in a five-point reduction in your score on that assignment per class day late. I will not accept small overnight, take-home assignments. You are responsible for material discussed and/or assigned when you are absent. If you are absent, contact a classmate to double check reading or homework assignments.

DePauw University is committed to providing equal access to academic programs and university-administered activities and reasonable modifications/accommodations to students with disabilities in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) of 1990, as amended in 2008. Any student needing special accommodations due to a disability should contact the Coordinator of Student Disability Services, Pam Roberts, 302 Harrison Hall or call (765) 658-6267. It is the responsibility of each student to discuss implementation of approved modifications/accommodations with each faculty member and/or staff member within one week of the date of receiving a modification/accommodation approval memo or within the first two weeks of the academic semester.

Academic Integrity:

I will not tolerate academic dishonesty (and you shouldn’t either). Cheating, plagiarism, presenting another person’s work as your own, etc. violates DePauw University’s policy on academic integrity and will result in penalties ranging from a zero on the assignment to course failure or expulsion. Presenting your own work as something new (i.e., “recycling” a paper from another course) is also unacceptable. See the policy and discussion of students’ obligations and rights in the Student Handbook. Be sure to follow guidelines for proper citation of sources in your writing. If you are unsure what constitutes plagiarism, representing another’s work as your own, “recycling,” etc., see me.

Schedule and Reading Assignments (tentative)

Aug. 26 *Introductions/Meet Diigo*

Bring laptops to class.

Aug. 31 *Frameworks*

Ingraham “The Heterosexual Imaginary” (Moodle)

Katz “The Invention of Heterosexuality” (Moodle)

Sept. 2 Sedgwick “Introduction: Axiomatic” (Moodle)

Sept. 7 *Identity, Community and Oppression: A Sexual Minority in the Making*

D’Emilio, Preface, Introduction, Chaps. 1-3

Somerville “Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body” (QSAnth)

Sept. 9 *Radical Visions and Conformist Pressures*

D’Emilio, Chaps. 4, 5, 7

Sept. 14 *Lesbian Feminism(s)*

D’Emilio, Chap. 6

Adrienne Rich “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence” (Moodle)

Marilyn Frye “Lesbian ‘Sex’” (Moodle)

Combahee River Collective Statement (Moodle)

Smith “Introduction” to *Home Girls* (Moodle)

Sept. 16 *Civil Rights and the Pursuit of Equality*

D’Emilio, Chaps. 8-11

Podcast: *This American Life “*81 Words” (Moodle)

Sept. 21 *Stonewall and Beyond*

D’Emilio, Chaps. 12-13, Afterward

Cole “Containing AIDS: Magic Johnson and Post [Reagan] America” (Moodle)

Sept. 23 Gamson “Must Identity Movements Self Destruct?: A Queer Dilemma” (Moodle)

Sept. 28 Epstein “A Queer Encounter: Sociology and the Study of Sexuality” (Moodle)

Namaste “The Politics of Inside/Out: Queer Theory, Poststructuralism, and a Sociological Approach to Sexuality” (Moodle)

**Synthesizing Essay #1 Due**

Sept. 30- *Perfomativity and Representation*

Oct. 5 Butler “Critically Queer” (Moodle)

Gagne and Tewksbury “Coming Out and Crossing Over” (Moodle)

Namaste “’Tragic Misreadings’: Queer Theory’s Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity” (QSAnth)

7-8:30pm, Peeler Aud., Bryan Watkins (a.k.a., “Shannel”) Attendance expected. (Sept. 30)

(Shannel will also perform at The New Q Review on Friday, Oct. 1)

Oct. 7/12 *Families*

Bechdel, *Fun Home*

**Take-Home Exam Due**

Oct. 14 *Families:* Readings to assigned.

Guest Lecture: Amie Klempnauer Miller

7:30-8:30pm, Peeler Aud. “She Looks Just Like You” Amie Klempnauer Miller. Attendance expected.

Oct. 19/21 Fall Break

Oct. 26 *Marriage and (non)Monogamy*

Dan Savage, *The Commitment*, Chaps. 1-9

Podcast: *This American Life* “Monogamy” (Moodle)

Oct. 28 Dan Savage, *The Commitment*, Chaps. 10-17

Burgess “Queer (Theory) Eye for the Straight (Legal) Guy” (Moodle)

**Statement of Research Project Due**

Nov. 2/4  *Bi*

Udis-Kessler “Identity/Politics: Historical Sources of the Bisexual Movement” (QSAnth)

Rust “Sexual Identity and Bisexual Identities”: The Struggle for Self-Description in a Changing Sexual Landscape” (QSAnth)

Conerly “The Politics of Black Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identity.” (QSAnth)

Goldman “Who is that *Queer* Queer?” (QSAnth)

Nov. 9 *A Closer Analysis: Female Masculinity*

Halberstam, Chaps. 1-3

Nov. 11 Halberstam, Chap. 4

Wong “Why Suzie Wong is Not a Lesbian”

Nov. 16 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* Chaps. 5

Nov. 18 Halberstam, *Female Masculinity* Chaps. 6-8

Ault “Hegemonic Discourse in an Oppositional Community” (QSAnth)

Nov. 23 *S&M and Body Modification*

Duncan “Negotiating Conflict in an S/M Dyke Community” (QSAnth)

Pitts “Visibly Queer: Body Technologies and Sexual Politics” (Moodle)

**Synthesizing Essay #2 Due**

Nov. 25 Thanksgiving Break

Nov. 30 *Virtually Queer*: Readings to be assigned.

Guest lecture: Julianne Miranda

Dec. 2/7 *Straight Queers*

Heasley “Queer Masculinities of Straight Men” (Moodle)

Moon “Insult and Inclusion: The Term ‘Fag Hag’ and Gay Male ‘Community’”

Dec. 9 Wrap-Up and Conclusions

Dec. 17 **Final Project Due at 4pm.**