Queer Theory/Queer Lives WMST 250/SOC201C

DePauw University

Spring 2012

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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.

Eaklor, Vicki. 2008. *Queer America: A People’s GLBT History of the United States.* New York: The New Press.

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.

 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.

 To aid in class discussion, this course will use the social bookmarking tool Diigo, to post, annotate, share and discuss online materials such as academic and pop culture articles, YouTube videos, cartoons, advertisements, historical documents and more. Each student will be assigned to a group that will be responsible for posting materials to Diigo by 8pm the day before class (Monday or Wednesday). Each group member should post at least one item with relevant insights for their assignment and class members should respond, comment or otherwise engage in dialogue about those posts. Everyone in the class is responsible for checking and responding thoughtfully to Diigo entries. The minimum requirement is once a week—I would like to see more than that from each student. However, one insightful post is better than several unrelated throw-away posts. I will announce Diigo discussion topics in class. These topics will serve as in-class activities or short homework assignments. Diigo participation and short writing assignments will be assessed on their critical insight and connection to course topics.

 My goal is that class members will supply relevant, insightful research, information or examples that we can critique, connect and apply to the course and beyond. The larger goal is that we will create a learning community where we share information and resources—relevant tags (or keywords) will help us achieve this. This is a rubric for social bookmarking, for examining the process of recording and remembering key sites and URL’s. The activity is in its simplest form at **remembering** level but as we add detail, explanations and structure it advances into **understanding**.

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| --- | --- |
| Level | Bookmarking |
| 1 | The user adds site to Favorites (Internet Explorer) or Bookmarks (Firefox) or adds URL to social bookmarking site. The user does not add tags (keywords) or comments. These locally stored bookmarks lack structure or organization. |
| 2 | The user adds a site to the Favorites or Bookmarks. The bookmarks are organized into appropriately-named folders. Or the user adds the URL to social bookmarking site. The user sometimes adds either tags or comments. The resources are added regardless of their validity or connection to course content or topics. |
| 3 | The user adds URL to a social bookmarking site. The student adds tags or comments. Tags are mostly well-constructed and suitable keywords. There is some shared/common use of tags (e.g. singular and plural keywords). There is some limited filtering on basis of validity to the course and unique disciplinary background (attempts validation). The comments or notes are simple. The user shares the bookmark with all members of their network |
| 4 | The user adds URL to a social bookmarking site and adds detailed, insightful comments and appropriate tags. The comments summarize the resource well and there is consistent use of shared/common tags with solid connection and validity to the course content and unique disciplinary background. The student shares the bookmark with appropriate members of their network. |

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, including your name and memo number in the document name (e.g., HallMemo1) 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 Spring Break—I will not accept more than four memos after that point of the semester.

 These memos should 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 sent/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 the score per class day late. I will not accept late 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 accommodations to students with disabilities, in compliance with the Americans With Disabilities Act and Amendments (ADAAA).  If you feel you need an accommodation based on the impact of a disability or learning challenge you are strongly encouraged to contact Pamela Roberts, Coordinator of Academic Success and Student Disability Services, for further information on how to receive accommodations and support. Academic Success and Student Disability Services is located in Harrison Hall, 302A, 765-658-6267.

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)

Jan. 31 *Introductions/Meet Diigo*

 Bring laptops to class.

Feb. 2 *Frameworks*

Ingraham “The Heterosexual Imaginary” (Moodle)

Katz “The Invention of Heterosexuality” (Moodle)

Feb. 7 Sedgwick “Introduction: Axiomatic” (Moodle)

Feb. 9 *Into the 20th Century*

 Eaklor, Ch. 1-2

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

Feb. 14 *Two World Wars and Cold War America*

 Eaklor, Ch. 3-4

Feb. 16/21 *1960s and Stonewall*

 Eaklor, Ch. 5-6

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

Feb. 23 *Lesbian Feminism(s)*

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

Combahee River Collective Statement (Moodle)

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

Faderman, “Lesbian Nation” and “Sex Wars in the 1980s” (Moodle)

Feb. 28/Mar. 1 *After Stonewall, AIDS, and Backlash*

 Eaklor, Ch. 7-8

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

 Kramer “1,112 and Counting” (Moodle)

Mar. 6 Gamson “Must Identity Movements Self Destruct?: A Queer Dilemma” (Moodle)

Mar. 8 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 at noon.**

Mar. 13/15 *Performativity and Representation*

Butler “Critically Queer” (Moodle)

 Rosario “Trans (Homo) Sexuality? Double Inversion, Psychiatric Confusion and Hetero- Hegemony” (QSAnth)

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

 Podcast: All Things Considered “Two Families Grapple with Sons’ Gender Identity” (Moodle)

Mar. 20/22 *Families*

Bechdel, *Fun Home*

Bechdel, “Coming Out Story” (Moodle)

Mar. 23 **Midterm Take-Home Exam Due at noon.**

 Last day to withdraw from a class with a grade of W.

Mar. 27/29 Spring Break

Apr. 3 *Marriage and (non)Monogamy*

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

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

Apr. 5 Dan Savage, *The Commitment*, Chaps. 10-17

 **Statement of Research Project Due**

Apr. 10/12 *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)

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

Apr. 17 *A Closer Analysis: Female Masculinity*

Halberstam, Chaps. 1-3

Apr. 19 Halberstam, Chap. 4

 Wong “Why Suzie Wong is Not a Lesbian” (QSAnth)

Apr. 24 Halberstam, Chap. 5

Apr. 26 Halberstam, Chaps. 6-8

May 1 *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**

May 3/8 *Straight Queers*

 Heasley “Queer Masculinities of Straight Men” (Moodle)

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

May 10 Wrap-Up and Conclusions

May 14 **Final Project Due at noon.**