

GRADUATE PROGRAMME IN SOCIOLOGY
York University

Contemporary Topics in Social Theory: Queer Theory
SOCI 6200 3.0M

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Seminar Time: Tuesdays, 2:30-5:30
Room: MC 213

Course Description

This course offers a critical introduction to queer theory with an emphasis on postcolonial and queer people of color critique. Although sexuality has been marginalized in much sociological writing, the assigned readings will unearth the central role of desire and Eros in modernity and in contemporary neo-liberal institutions. A broad definition of sexuality is adopted to include the bio-political, governmental, corporate and postcolonial uses of desire to understand human relations, affect, gender, class, race, disability and so forth.

Special emphasis will be placed on the Freudian legacy in sociology, including the formative work of Herbert Marcuse (1955) on *Eros and Civilization* and Edward Said's *Freud and the Non-European* (2003). We will then move on to what Keven Floyd (2009) calls *The Reification of Desire* to investigate what a queer Marxist approach offers to our understanding of consumer capitalism. Linked to questions of capitalist desire and commodity fetishism is the question of the colonial contest. Not only will we consider the history of sexuality as told by Michel Foucault in volumes one, two and three, but through the critical writings of Edward Said, Scott Morgensen, Andrea Smith, Alexander Weheliye, Rosi Braidotti, etc., who remind us that the history of sexuality is also a history of race, colonialism and empire.

Sexuality is ultimately about life and death. Select lectures given by Foucault at the Collège de France (1978-79) on bio-politics--the use of life--will be read alongside the deployment of what J. A. Mbembé calls necropolitics and death in the postcolony. We end with an investigation of sexuality in its post-human, technological and virtual forms. We will directly engage the scholarship of David Eng, Muñoz, José Esteban, Mel Chen and Jasbir Puar. Along with scholarship on the post-human inspired by Deleuze and Guattari, we will read select works in transgender studies engaging the interface between soma (body), technology (techne), and society.

Evaluation:

Presentation: 25%
Participation: 25%
Essay: 50%

If you are new to queer theory I recommend:

Jagose, Annamarie. "Queer theory." (1996).

Nikki Sullivan. 2003. *A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory* New York: New York University Press. (Especially chapters 1, 3 and 4).

Steven Seidman. 1996. *Queer Theory/Sociology* Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.

Riki Wilchins. 2004. *Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer*. Los Angeles: Alyson Books.

Class Schedule

INTRODUCTION TO QUEER THEORY:

Introduction to Queer Theory (and the course)

January 5

**No Readings Assigned*

Presentation Sign-Up, administration and introductory lecture.

Queer Theory

January 12

Janet Halley and Andrew Parker. 2011. *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory* Duke University Press: Durham and London. (Introduction and Chapter 2 by Carla Fredccero).

Steven Seidman. 1996. "Introduction" in *Queer Theory/Sociology* (Eds.) Steven Seidman. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers, pp. 1-30.

Michael Warner. 1993. "Introduction" In *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Eds.) Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, pp. vii-xxxi.

PART I:

Eros, Civilization and Sigmund Freud

Eros and Civilization

January 19

Marcuse, Herbert. *Eros and civilization: A philosophical inquiry into Freud*. Vol. 496. Beacon Press, 1974.

Suggested Readings

Freud, Sigmund. *Totem and taboo*. London: Pelican Books, 1938.

Sigmund Freud. 1975 [1905] "Three essays on the theory of sexuality". Translated by James Strachey. New York: Basic Books.

Marxism, Neoliberalism and Queer Theory

Queer Marxism

January 26

Floyd, Kevin. *The reification of desire: toward a queer Marxism*. U. of Minnesota Press, 2009.

Suggested Readings

Hennessy, Rosemary. "Queer theory, left politics." *Rethinking Marxism* 7.3 (1994): 85-111.

Trans* Studies and Queer Theory

Trans Critiques

February 2

Susan Stryker. Rage, Performing Transgender. "My Words to Victor Frankenstein above the Village of Chamounix." *The Transgender Studies Reader* (2013): 244.

Stryker, Susan. "Transgender studies: Queer theory's evil twin." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 10.2 (2004): 212-215.

Stone, Sandy. *The empire strikes back*. 1994.

PART II

Foucauldian Biopolitics

Abnormality

February 9

Foucault, Michel. *Abnormal: lectures at the Collège de France, 1974-1975*. Vol. 2. Macmillan, 2007.

Suggested Readings:

Foucault, Michel, François Ewald, and Alessandro Fontana. *The birth of biopolitics: lectures at the Collège de France, 1978-1979*. Ed. Michel Senellart. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.

Foucault, Michel. "The History of Sexuality: Volume I-An Introduction." (1978).

READING WEEK (No Classes on February 16th)

Necropolitics

February 23

Braidotti, Rosi. "Bio-power and Necro-politics." *Springerin, Hefte fur Gegenwartskunst* 13.2 (2007).

Mbembe, J-A., and Libby Meintjes. "Necropolitics." *Public culture* 15.1 (2003): 11-40.

Haritaworn, Jin, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco. *Queer necropolitics*. Routledge, 2014.

Suggested Readings:

Braidotti, Rosi. "Bio-power and necro-politics: Reflections on an ethics of sustainability.

Springerin 2 (07)." (2007).

Mbembé, J-A. *On the postcolony*. Vol. 41. Univ of California Press, 2001.

Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigeneity

March 1

Morgensen, Scott Lauria. "The biopolitics of settler colonialism: Right here, right now." *Settler Colonial Studies* 1.1 (2011): 52-76.

Morgensen, Scott Lauria. "SETTLER HOMONATIONALISM Theorizing Settler Colonialism

within Queer Modernities." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16.1-2 (2010): 105-131.
Smith, Andrea. "QUEER THEORY AND NATIVE STUDIES The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16.1-2 (2010): 41-68.

Queer People of Color Critique

March 8

Said, Edward W. "Orientalism reconsidered." *Cultural Critique* (1985): 89-107.
Kapoor, Ilan. "The queer Third World." *Third World Quarterly* 36.9 (2015): 1611-1628.
Weheliye, Alexander G. *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Biopolitics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human*. Duke University Press, 2014. (Chapters 2 and 4).

Suggested Readings

Agamben, Giorgio. *Homo sacer: Sovereign power and bare life*. Stanford University Press, 1998.

PART III

Queer Intimacies, Neo-liberalism and the Future

Neoliberalism

March 15

Puar, Jasbir K. "Coda: The cost of getting better suicide, sensation, switchpoints." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18.1 (2012): 149-158.
Eng, David L. *The feeling of kinship: Queer liberalism and the racialization of intimacy*. Duke University Press, 2010.
Duggan, Lisa. *The twilight of equality?: Neoliberalism, cultural politics, and the attack on democracy*. Beacon Press, 2012.

Affective Intimacies in the Queer Neo-liberal Postcolony

March 22

Eng, David. "Queer Orphans and Their Neoliberal Saviors." *Mothering Queerly, Queering Motherhood: Resisting Monomaternality in Adoptive, Lesbian, Blended, and Polygamous Families* (2013): 85.
Eng, David L. "Transnational adoption and queer diasporas." *Social Text* 21.3 (2003): 1-37.
Muñoz, José Esteban. *Cruising utopia: The then and there of queer futurity*. NYU Press, 2009.
Chen, Mel Y. "Toxic animacies, inanimate affections." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17.2-3 (2011): 265-286.
Musser, Amber Jamilla. "Objects of Desire: Toward an Ethics of Sameness." *Theory & Event* 16.2 (2013).

Suggested Readings

Hartman, Stephen. "The Internet and Its Discontents—or Diamonds are a Girl's BFF: Commentary on Danielle Knafo's Paper "Guys and Dolls: Relational Life in the Technological Era"." *Psychoanalytic Dialogues* 25.4 (2015): 516-523.
Puar, Jasbir K. "I would rather be a cyborg than a goddess": Becoming-Intersectional in Assemblage Theory." *PhiloSOPHIA* 2.1 (2012): 49-66.

Chen, Mel Y. "Unpacking intoxication, racialising disability." *Medical humanities* 41.1 (2015): 25-29.

Documentary: Objectum Sexuality

Queer, Posthuman and Trans Animalities

March 29

Luciano, Dana, and Mel Y. Chen. "Introduction: Has the Queer Ever Been Human?." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21.2 (2015): iv-207.

Muñoz, José Esteban. "Theorizing Queer Inhumanisms: The Sense of Brownness." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 21.2 (2015): 209-210.

Nurka, Camille. "Animal Techne Transing Posthumanism." *TSQ: Transgender Studies Quarterly* 2.2 (2015): 209-226.

The End is Only the Beginning...