

Introduction to Queer Studies

PSU: WGS 360U

Day & Time: Monday and Wednesday 10:00-11:50

Place: Clay Building, Room 102

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Course Description

This course will provide us with a framework for understanding the history and contemporary applications of queer theory and interdisciplinary queer studies. We will interrogate conceptions of gender, sex, the “body”, erotic pleasure, sexuality, and sexual orientation as social and cultural derivations and, thus, historical. We will examine the social and political pressures that emerge from such formulations. We will not, however, simply accept the now familiar academic axiom “it’s because it is socially constructed”; we will endeavor to critically assess the consequences of certain intellectual traditions and the ramifications on social policy, popular culture, the law and governmentality, the sciences, and politics. Finally, we will explore these contested ideas in the contextualized lives of so-called queer citizens.

Course Objectives

- 1) To introduce students to the field of queer theory and the perspectives of queer studies.
- 2) To familiarize students with social constructionist and other queer, postmodern, post-structural, and anthropological theories and ideas about gender, sex, and sexuality.
- 3) To provide a framework from which students can critically examine how gender and sexuality may or may not intersect, both historically and contemporaneously.
- 4) To illuminate the processes involved in the public and (supposed) private performance of desire and pleasure, the “erotic”, and sex-acts.
- 5) To provide a forum for discussion on issues surrounding sexual identity, gender, and transgender identifications.
- 6) To understand the notion and practice of “queering” science, GLBT studies, popular media and entertainment, education, public policy, and politics. To understand the relationship of Queer Theory and queer studies to literary studies, critical theory, political economy, fantasy and ideology.
- 7) To review and contextualize prominent queer persons, supporters, and detractors.
- 8) To apply the knowledge gathered from our studies to the scope of our own lives, our university, and our communities.
- 9) To provide a safe space for all students to learn regardless of gender identity, sexual orientation, or ability. This class is proudly part of the *PSU Safe Space Network*.

Course Prerequisites

The syllabus, class materials, and assignments are designed with a seminar-style, intense engagement in mind. Previous introductory course work in anthropology, social history, women’s studies, sociology

or other liberal arts and sciences is helpful, though not absolutely necessary. I encourage you to supplement your studies and have provided a supplementary reading list to aid you. This class is partially online. You are required to possess and use a working email, a working ODIN account, and are required to be familiar with posting, blogging, and other technical skills required to use these communication platforms. This class is an approved UNST Junior Cluster Course: *Sexualities*, a WGS degree course, and an approved course in the *Gender, Sexuality, and Queer Studies Minor*. Enrolling in this class and accepting the syllabus is to accept the terms and conditions of this course; this course may be subject to changes, additions, and deletions to course content and will be given with as much advance notice as possible.

Course Requirements

Attendance: Your presence and participation is crucial to you and your colleagues' successful understanding of the material and the success, in general, of Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies, and other discussion-based courses. Attendance will be taken every day. Each student is required to fulfill all assignments and follow all requirements to completion.

Course Readings and Assignments: All readings and assignments **due on date listed**. Course reader and texts will be discussed in class. You will be required to compile a course packet of various readings, texts, media, and film.

Rubric: This will form the basis for evaluation and grading. Late assignments will be worth ½ credit per assignment. Attend class even if you have not fulfilled assignments!

(4) 3pg. Response Papers (20%)

(4) Quizzes (10%)

(5) Weekly Research, Material Assessments, and In-class Applications (10%)

(1) Mid-Term Short Answer Examination (10%)

(1) Queer Study #1 (10%)

(1) Queer Study #2 (10%)

(1) Queer Study #3 (10%)

(20) Attendance/Participation (20%)

Grading: 90-100%=A/A-

80-89% =B+/B/B-

70-79% =C+/C/C-

P/NP: Students taking this pass/no-pass course are expected to attend all class hours and will receive a *non-passing grade for failure to attend 16/20 class sessions*, in addition to completing all the regular course assignments.

Response Papers: Two copies of paper due **Monday** in-class (one for instructor, one for group discussion on **Wednesday**). These Response Papers must respond to the week's assigned readings, to class proceedings and in-class discussions, and other materials that you see fit to introduce (see **Weekly Research** below). Discussion notes are to be approximately *three, double-spaced, typed pages per reading* in no larger than *12 pt. font* with standard margins. You must employ *MLA in-text citations*. You do not have to write in a formal essay style, but your writing form and style must be clear and cogent, substantial, and thoroughly engage with *all of the week's readings*. These writings may form the *foundation* for our weekly research, assessment, and application discussions (see below).

Weekly Research, Material Assessment, and In-class Application: Each *Wednesday* we will form variously composed groups and we will share our Response Papers, Weekly Research, and other

materials. In addition, we will each be prepared to present the materials we have gathered that illustrate, contradict, or otherwise illuminate the topics of the class and the various readings. These materials will generally be of your choosing, but must respond to various prompts assigned in class. This should help you engage further with queer studies and queer theory's general emphasis on active participation, "real-world" application, and activism. Materials must be presented in material form (e.g. web research must be printed, images must be prepared to share, items must be on-hand, etc.).

Mid-Term Short Answer Examination: Blue Book short answer mid-term examination. This exam will take an full class period.

Quizzes: Monday and TBA.

Queer Studies #1,#2,#3: Further study on specific queer/sex/sexuality/gender topics. These may include procuring and watching films and other media, reading additional literature, examining other academic texts, and working in small groups on short presentations. All will require some form of writing.

Extra credit: Attendance at local lecture, meeting, or event (through Week Seven only). The need for sensitivity to places, people, and proceedings is obvious; you are a representative of this class and PSU. If asked, be candid about the reasons for your attendance. Review with instructor before attending. A **3 pg. reflection paper** is required (.5%).

Policy on plagiarism, illness, emergencies, and extensions: A grade of (I)-incomplete is only allowed in the case of a documented, serious illness, or a documented emergency . In the case of serious illness or emergency contact the instructor as soon as possible. **Students with a documented disability and needing accommodations in this course should immediately inform the instructor during Week One.** *Plagiarism* (intellectual theft) is a most serious academic offense. Any assignment containing plagiarized material will receive a failing grade and you may be reported to university officials. You are responsible for reading and understanding the Portland State University's policy on plagiarism. Please ask the instructor, refer to the Anthropology Department website, or inquire at the PSU Writing Center if you have any questions.

Course Outline

Remember: All assignments, readings, and research are due on day listed.

Monday, Sept 27: Intro to Queer Studies

Welcome to Queer Studies-Introductions

“QUEER”

Syllabus Review & Course Reader

How to engage with and fulfill the Weekly Research assignment

Wednesday, Sept 29: Placing Queer Theory in Context & Queer Methodologies

Intro to the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department

Intro to Gender, Sexuality, and Queer Studies Minor

How to write a successful response paper

10 Queer Questions

DUE: Weekly Research #1:

(1) Statement and Response: I am a student in an Intro to Queer Studies class...

(2) 1- newspaper, web-media, or other media based report/article on sex, sexuality, sexual
“orientation”

Monday, Oct 4: Queer Theories

Reading: “The Trouble With Harry Thaw”, Martha M. Umphrey

Reading: *Queer Theory, Gender Theory* (Chpts. 3,6,7,8,11), Riki Wilchens

Reading: *History of Sexuality, Vol.1* (selections), Michele Foucault

Quiz #1

Response Paper #1

Wednesday, Oct 6: Identity and Deviancy

Reading: *Homosexual and Heterosexual, Questioning the Terms*, Jonathan Ned Katz

Weekly Research #2: My deviant

Monday, Oct 11: Performativity

Reading: “Imitation and Gender Insubordination”, Judith Butler

Reading: “Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence”, Adrienne Rich

Response Paper #2

Wednesday, Oct 13: Policing Gender and Sex

Weekly Research #3:

Monday, Oct 18: Public Policies

Reading: “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality”, Gayle Rubin

Reading: *Sex: What You Don't Know Can Kill You* (selections), Joe S. McIlhaney, MD

Reading: “Paedophilia. Saliromania. Algolagnia.” in *The Erotic Minorities: A Swedish View*, Lars Ullerstam, M.D.

Quiz #2

Wednesday, Oct 20: Queer Subjectivity

Reading: "Tragic Misreadings: Queer Theory's Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity", Vivian K. Namaste

Monday, Oct 25: Queering Scientific Rhetoric

Reading: "Confronting the Sky Together" in *Sex at Dawn: The Prehistoric Origins of Modern Sexuality*, Christopher Ryan and Cacilda Jetha

Response Paper #3

Wednesday, Oct 27: Midterm

Mid-term: Blue Book, Short Answer Examination

Monday, Nov 1: Sex, Race, Control

Reading: *Same Sex Affairs: Constructing and Controlling Homosexuality in the Pacific Northwest: "Sex in the City"*, Peter Boag

Reading: "Scientific Racism and the Homosexual Body", Siobahn B. Somerville

Quiz #3

Queer Study #1

Wednesday, Nov 3: Sex, Race, Control

Weekly Research #3: Body Maps

Monday, Nov 8: Bodies That Matter

Reading: *Between Men* (selection), Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick

Reading: *Written on the Body* (selections), Jeanette Winterson

Reading: "Sex Change and the Popular Press", Joanne Meyerowitz

Response Paper #4

Wednesday, Nov 10: Bodies That Matter

Weekly Research #4: TBA

Monday, Nov 15: Queer Political Economy

Reading: "Capitalism and Gay Identity", John D'Emilio

Reading: "A Question of Class", Dorothy Allison

Reading: "Sex in Public", Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner

Reading: "Is Sex Work Queer?", Corina McKay

Queer Study #2

Wednesday, Nov 17: Queer Political Economy

Reading: "Adultery", Laura Kipnis

Weekly Research #5: TBA

Monday, Nov 22: Queer Investments

Reading: "Wounded Attachments: Late Modern Oppositional Formations", Wendy Brown

Reading: “Intimate Investments: Homonormativity, Global Lockdown, and the Seductions of Empire”, Ana M. Agenthangelou, et. al.

Quiz #4

Wednesday, Nov 24: Queer Relations

TBA

Monday, Nov 29: Queering Film and other Popular Cultures

Reading: “What is Queer Film History?”, Harry M. Benshoff & Sean Griffin

Reading: “From the Romantic Utopia to the American Dream”, Eva Illouz

Queer Study #3

Wednesday, Dec 1: Queering Studies

Reporting on Queer Studies