

QUEERING THEORY GWSS/GLBT 4403

Fall 2009

Tues/Thurs: 2:30-3:45

FORD 400

Blog Address: <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/puot0002/glb4403>

Instructor: Dr. Sara L. Puotinen

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COURSE DESCRIPTION

In this upper level seminar we will use the work of Judith Butler as our focal point for tracing multiple practices of queering theory and mapping the shifting terrain of the term "queer" and its role within critical sexuality studies. After beginning with the investigation of some preliminary questions—What is queering theory? and Who is Judith Butler?—we will spend the rest of the course engaging in practices of queering through, beside and against Butler. Drawing upon readings by Butler and putting them into conversation with a wide range of important queer thinkers (Foucault, Halberstam, Sedgwick, Moraga, Edelman, Gopinath, Munoz, Anzaldua and more), we will explore some terms/concepts that are central to understanding and engaging in queering theory: 1. Gender, 2. Performativity, 3. the Subject, 4. Resistance, 5. Trouble (being in it, making it and staying in it), 6. Norms and 7. Queer Time.

Some questions that will come up this semester include:

1. Is queer theory a matter of doing or being? Can it be both?
2. How does Butler engage in queering theory?
3. Is Butler a "bad writer" or a difficult writer? What (if anything) is important about distinguishing between bad and difficult writing?
4. How has Butler's understanding and promotion of queer(ing) theory changed since the writing of *Gender Trouble* in 1990?
5. What does it mean to trouble gender? Who can trouble gender? When is troubling gender subverting dominant norms and when is it merely reinforcing those norms?
6. What are the political and ethical possibilities of queering theory?
7. What can queer theory do with norms (besides rejecting them)?
8. Does queering theory have a future? If so, what kind?

COURSE GOALS

- To explore the work of Judith Butler and her importance for queer, feminist and critical theory.
- To use Butler as a lens for exploring queer theory as an important intervention in both feminist and gay/lesbian theory, politics and ethics.
- To gain an understanding of some key concepts, critiques and figures within queer theory.

COURSE EXPECTATIONS

Attend Class Regularly. You are allowed to have **two unexcused absences** during this semester. You are responsible for contacting other students to get any notes, handouts or information on assignments that you might have missed.

Let me know if you have any problems. If at any point throughout the semester you have questions or concerns about this course, please know that you are more than welcome to make an appointment to meet with me. If you would like to meet to discuss a grade that you received, please email me with your questions or concerns and return your graded assignment to me at least one day in advance of our meeting. This will enable me to give you the best possible feedback.

Be an active participant in the class. Remember that everyone helps to shape the class. Your participation does make a difference. To that end, you are responsible for coming to class fully prepared (with fully read texts in hand), actively and respectfully contributing to discussions, asking questions when you don't understand the material and giving feedback to the instructor on what is working and not working in the class.

Turn your assignments in on time. All written assignments are due at the beginning of class on the date specified in this syllabus. I will only accept late papers under special circumstances.

OTHER COURSE INFORMATION

Academic Dishonesty

This includes cheating on assignments, plagiarizing (misrepresenting as your own work any work that has been written by another author), and submitting the same paper or substantially similar paper to meet the requirements of more than one course without the approval of all the instructors concerned. The instructor will report such dishonesty. It is grounds for failure in the course.

Disability Services

Students with disabilities who require accommodations in meeting course requirements should meet with me as early as possible in the term. Class materials, including this syllabus, can be made available in alternative formats upon request. It is your responsibility to provide documentation from Disability Services to receive accommodations.

Non-native English Speakers and Writers

If you need some extra assistance with the reading and writing assignments, please contact me early in the term.

U of M Harassment Policy

The University of Minnesota is committed to the policy that all persons shall have equal access to its programs, facilities, and employment without regard to race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation. For further information, call the University Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action, 418 Morrill Hall, 624-9547.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Overview

Class Participation	20%
Blog Entries and Active Engagement	40%
2 Presentations (2 @ 10% each)	20%
Final Wrap-up	20%

Assignment Description

The bulk of your assignments this semester (blog entries, blog participation, 2 presentations and your final wrap-up) will be organized around the development of and participation in our class blog (blog.lib.umn.edu/puot0002/glb4403). Once we have worked out the details together in the first and second weeks of class, I will distribute and post a more detailed handout on our blog.

By the third week of course you will be required to pick one of the suggested topics related to queer and queering theory. These topics are listed at the end of this description. You will be responsible for tracking this term throughout the course of the semester. By tracking I mean that you will be required to pay particular attention to your topic as you are reading, discussing and thinking about queering theory. You will be **required to post weekly entries** in which you critically reflect on your topic and: a. how it is addressed in our readings or discussions or b. how it is relevant to current events or c. how it is represented within popular culture (television shows, movies, music, on the internet). You are encouraged to be creative in your tracking of the term. You can draw on a wide range of sources and post your blog entries in many different forms.

In addition to posting your own entries, you are **required to actively read other blogs and other students' entries**. Your active engagement will come in the form of commenting on other blogs, creating links within your own entries, and incorporating comments from other entries/blogs into your in-class participation.

Each of the suggested topics is explicitly related to the readings for one class session. You are required to do **one** (roughly 10 minute) **presentation** on your topic on the day that we are explicitly reading about and discussing it. You are also required to do **one** (roughly 10 minute) **presentation** on your topic/blog participation during the last week of the course. Details about your presentation will be listed in the detailed handout.

Topics
GENDER

Brief Presentation Date
October 6

PERFORMATIVITY/PERFORMANCE	October 13
ABJECT	October 22
RESISTANCE	October 24
REJECTION or REFUSAL	October 27
BODIES and MATERIAL EXPERIENCE	October 29
PUNISHMENT/CONSEQUENCES	November 3
(ANTI) ASSIMILATION	November 10
NORMS	November 19
GLOBAL/TRANSNATIONAL/DIASPORA	November 24
NATION/CITIZEN	December 1
ANTI-CAPITALISM	December 3
YOUTH	December 8

Finally, you are required to submit a **final wrap-up on your experiences** tracking your chosen topic and on helping to develop and participate in the blog. This wrap-up can come in the form of a lengthy blog entry (or series of entries) or a separate (more formal) reflective essay. Please see me if you have other thoughts on how to organize/develop/articulate your reflective thoughts on your topic and your experience with the blog.

CLA GRADING CRITERIA

- A achievement outstanding relative to the level necessary to meet course requirements
- B achievement significantly above that level necessary to meet course requirements
- C achievement meeting the basic course requirements in every respect
- D achievement worthy of credit even though it does not meet the basic requirements
- F performance failing to meet the basic course requirements
- S equivalent to a grade of C or better

COURSE READINGS:

Books (available at U of M Bookstore)

Butler, Judith. Gender Trouble
 Butler, Judith. Undoing Gender
 Mattilda. Nobody Passes

Articles (available through WebCT and/or through Paradigm copies*)

To access WebCT, go to myU. Then click on My Courses. Click on the WebVista C link for our course (GWSS 4403 or GLBT 4403). Log in. Click on our class. The readings, which are organized under the days that we will discuss them, should appear on the front page.

*If desired, readings may also be available in a course reader through Paradigm copies. We will discuss this possibility on the first day of class.

COURSE SCHEDULE

SEPTEMBER

8 Introductions to course and each other

10 Introduction to Blogs and the Blog Assignment

Readings:

- a. Dolan, Jill. "Blogging On Queer. Connections in the Arts and the Five Lesbian Brothers," especially 491-493 and 504-506 (WebCT)
- b. Mitra/Gajjala. "Queer Blogging in Indian Digital Diasporas: A Dialogic Encounter" (WebCT)

c. Browse the Trouble Blog*

<http://trouble.room34.com>

*Look especially at the categories tagged under "queer" and "Judith Butler." The tags are located about half way down the blog on the right hand side.

Optional:

Rak, Julie. "The Digital Queer: Weblogs and Internet Identity" (WebCT)

INTRODUCTION: What is Queering Theory?

15 What is queering theory, part 1?

Readings:

- a. Smith, Cherry. "What is This Thing Called Queer?" in The Material Queer (WebCT)
- b. Berlant, Lauren and Elizabeth Freeman. "From 'Queer Nationality' in The Material Queer (WebCT)
- c. Duggan, Lisa. "Making it Perfectly Queer" in Sex Wars (WebCT)
- d. Sullivan, Nikki. "Queer: A Matter of Being or Doing?" (WebCT)

17 What is queering theory, part 2?

Readings:

- a. Cohen, Cathy J. Excerpts from "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential Of Queer Politics" in Black Queer Studies (WebCT)
- b. Johnson, Patrick. Excerpts from "'Quare' Studies, or (almost) everything I know I Learned from my grandmother" in Black Queer Studies (WebCT)
- c. Moraga, Cherrie. "Queer Aztlán: The Re-formation of Chicano Tribe" in The Material Queer (WebCT)

22 What is queering theory, part 3?

Readings:

- a. the GLQ Archive. "New Directions in Multiethnic, Racial and Global Queer Studies" in GLQ (2003), 10: 1 (WebCT)
- b. Eng/Halberstam/Munoz. "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?" in Social Text (2005), 23: 3-4 (WebCT)

INTRODUCTION: Who is Judith Butler?

24 ...as a Person

Readings:

- a. Feminist Review. "Judith Butler: Philosophical Encounters of the Third Kind"
<http://feministreview.blogspot.com/2007/04/judith-butler-philosophical-encounters.html>

FILM: Judith Butler: Philosophical Encounters of the Third Kind

29 ...as a Difficult Writer

Readings:

- a. Butler, Judith. "A Bad Writer Writes Back" (online)
http://www.gse.buffalo.edu/FAS/Bromley/classes/theory/Butler_response.htm
- b. Butler, Judith. Excerpt from "Value of Difficulty" (WebCT)
- c. Salih, Sara. "Judith Butler and the Ethics of Difficulty" in *The Critical Quarterly*. (2003), 45: 3 (WebCT)
- d. Interview with Judith Butler. "Changing the Subject" in *jac* (WebCT)

OCTOBER

1 ...as a Queer Theorist

Readings:

- a. Butler, Judith. "1990 and 1999 Preface" in *Gender Trouble*, vii-xxxvi)
- b. Osbourne/Segal. "Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler"
<http://www.theory.org.uk/but-int1.htm>

QUEERING THROUGH/BESIDE/AGAINST BUTLER: Some Key Terms

6 GENDER

Readings:

- a. Butler, Judith. "Chapter 1: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire" in *Gender Trouble*, 1-46 (GT)
- b. Valentine/Wichins. "One Percent on the Burn Chart: Gender, Genitals and Hermaphrodites with Attitudes" in *Social Text* (1997) 52-53 (WebCT)

PRESENTATION ON GENDER

8 PERFORMATIVITY: Drag and beyond

Readings:

- a. Butler, Judith. "From Gender Interiority to Gender Performativity" in *Gender Trouble*, 183-193 (GT)
- b. Butler, Judith. "Ambivalent Drag" in *Bodies that Matter* (WebCT)

FILM: clips from Paris is Burning

13 PERFORMATIVITY

Readings:

- a. Manalansan VI, Martin Fl. Excerpts from Global Divas (WebCT)
 - Introduction: Points of Departure
 - Chapter 4: The Biyuti and Drama of Everyday Life
- b. Lee, Rachel. "Where's My Parade?: On Asian-American Diva Nation"
<http://www.barnard.edu/sfonline/ps/lee.htm>

PRESENTATION ON PERFORMANCE/PERFORMATIVITY

15 ABJECT

Readings:

- a. Butler, Judith. "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions" in Gender Trouble, 175-183 (GT)
- b. Chambers/Carver. "The 'natural' and 'the Divine'" in Troubling Politics (WebCT)
- c. Sedgwick/Moon. "Divinity: A Dossier A Performance Piece A Little-Understood Emotion" in Tendencies (WebCT)
- d. Kristeva, Julia. Excerpt from Powers of Horror (WebCT)

FILM: clips from Female Trouble

22 ABJECT

Readings:

- a. Anzaldúa, Gloria. "Preface" and "The Homeland, Aztlán/El otro México" in Borderlands/La Frontera (WebCT)
- b. Bérubé, Michael. "Epilogue: Specters of Disability" in Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability (WebCT)
- c. Perez, Hiram. "You Can Have My Brown Body and Eat it, Too!" in Social Text (2005), 23:3-4 (WebCT)

PRESENTATION ON ABJECT

24 RESISTANCE as PARODY/RESIGNIFICATION

Readings:

- a. Foucault, Michel. "Method" in The History of Sexuality, Volume 1 (WebCT)
- b. Butler, Judith. "From Parody to Politics" in Gender Trouble, 194-204 (GT)
- c. Butler, Judith. "Critically Queer" in Bodies That Matter (WebCT)
- d. Nussbaum, Martha. "The Professor of Parody: The Hip Defeatism of Judith Butler"
<http://www9.georgetown.edu/faculty/irvinem/theory/Nussbaum-Butler-Critique-NR-2-99.pdf>

PRESENTATION ON RESISTANCE

27 RESISTANCE as DIS-sing: Disidentification and Disavowal

Readings:

- a. Muñoz, José Esteban. "Introduction: Performing Disidentification" in Disidentifications: queers of color and the performance of Politics (WebCT)
- b. Butler, Judith. "Beside Oneself: On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy" in Undoing Gender, 17-40 (UG)

PRESENTATION ON REJECTION

29 TROUBLE: Being(s) in Trouble, part 1

Readings:

- a. Prosser, Jay. "Judith Butler. Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex" (WebCT)
- b. Namaste, Ki. "'Tragic Misreadings': Queer Theory's Erasure of Transgender Subjectivity" in Queer Studies (WebCT)

PRESENTATION ON BODIES and MATERIAL EXPERIENCES

NOVEMBER

3 TROUBLE: Being(s) in Trouble, part 2

Readings:

- a. Spade, Dean. "Compliance is Gendered: Struggling for Gender Self-Determination in a Hostile Economy" in Transgender Rights (WebCT)

PRESENTATION ON PUNISHMENT/CONSEQUENCES

NOVEMBER

5 TROUBLE: Making Trouble, part 1

Readings:

- a. Review Butler, Judith. "1990 Preface" in Gender Trouble (GT)
- b. Chambers/Carver. "Introduction: troubling politics" in Judith Butler and Political Theory: Troubling Politics (WebCT)
- c. Butler, Judith. Excerpt from "Critique as Virtue" in The Judith Butler Reader (WebCT)
- d. Sandoval, Chela. "Dissident Globalizations, Emancipatory Methods, Social-Erotics" in Queer Globalizations (WebCT)

10 TROUBLE: Making Trouble, part 2

Readings:

- a. Mattilda. Selections from Nobody Passes (NP)

PRESENTATION ON ANTI-ASSIMILATION

12 TROUBLE: Staying in Trouble

Readings:

- a. Schippert, Claudia. "Containing Uncertainty: Sexual Values and Citizenship" in *Journal of Homosexuality* 52: 1-2 (WebCT)
- b. Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Acting in Concert" in *Undoing Gender*, 1-16 (UG)

17 NORMS: What's wrong with Normal?

Readings:

- a. Warner, Michael. "Introduction" in *Fear of a Queer Planet* (WebCT)
- b. Spade, Dean. "Mutilating Gender" in *The Transgender Studies Reader* (WebCT)
- c. Duggan, Lisa. "Introduction" in *The Twilight of Equality* (WebCT)
- d. Holland, Sharon. "The Question of Normal"
<http://www.barnard.edu/sfonline/ps/holland.htm>

19 NORMS: Doing things with Norms

Reading:

- a. Jakobsen, Janet. "Queer is? Queer Does? Normativity and the Problem of Resistance" in *GLQ* (1998), 4: 4 (WebCT)
- b. Butler, Judith. Selections from *Undoing Gender* (UG)

PRESENTATION ON NORMS

24 TIME: POST 9/11

Readings:

- a. Puar, Jasbir Q. "Queer Times, Queer Assemblages" in *Social Text* (2005), 23: 3-4 (WebCT)
- b. Gopinath, Gayatri. "Bollywood Spectacles: Queer Diasporic Critique in the Aftermath of 9/11" in *Social Text* (2005), 23: 3-4 (WebCT)

PRESENTATION ON GLOBAL/TRANSNATIONAL/DIASPORA

DECEMBER

1 TIME: POST 9/11

Readings:

- a. Butler, Judith. From *Precarious Life* (WebCT)
- b. Butler, Judith. From *Frames of War* (WebCT)

PRESENTATION ON NATION/CITIZEN

26 no class: thanksgiving

DECEMBER

3 TIME and YOUTH, part 1

Reading:

- a. Halberstam, Judith. "Introduction: Queer Temporality and Postmodern Geographies" in *In a Queer Time and Place* (WebCT)
- b. Halberstam, Judith. "What's That Smell? Queer Temporalities and Subcultural Lives" <http://www.barnard.edu/sfonline/ps/halberst.htm>
- b. Nyong'o, Tavia. "Punk'd Theory" in *Social Text* (2005), 23: 3-4 (WebCT)

PRESENTATION ON ANTI-CAPITALISM

8 TIME and YOUTH, part 2

Readings:

- a. Edelman, Lee. "The Future is Kids stuff" (WebCT)
- b. Snediker, Michael. Excerpt from *Queer Optimism* (WebCT)

PRESENTATION ON YOUTH

10 PRESENTATIONS

15 PRESENTATIONS