

QUEERING THEORY

GWSS/GLBT 4403 * Fall 2011 * Tues/Thurs: 2:30-3:45 * Ford 151

Blog: <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/puot0002/quet2011>

Twitter Hashtag: #quet2011

Instructor: Dr. Sara L. Puotinen

Office Hours: Thurs 12:45-2, Online Office Hours (via twitter): Wed, 12-1

Office Location: Ford 444

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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 (Cohen, Foucault, Halberstam, Muñoz, Anzaldúa, Allison and more), we will explore some terms/concepts that are central to understanding and engaging in queering theory: 1. Gender, 2. the Abject, 3. Resistance, 4. Precariousness, 5. Norms and 6. Trouble (making it and being in it).

Some questions that will come up this semester include:

1. Is queer theory a matter of doing or being? Can it be both?
2. What is queer/ing pedagogy?
3. (How) can engaging with blogs and twitter enable class members to queer academic spaces and academic work?
4. Is Butler a “bad writer” or a difficult writer? What (if anything) is important about distinguishing between bad and difficult writing?
5. What are the political and ethical possibilities of queering theory?
6. What can queer theory do with norms (besides rejecting them)?
7. What does it mean to make and be in trouble?
8. What is the queer art of failure?

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. Please do not contact me requesting missed notes or assignments. Instead, I would encourage you to exchange email addresses or phone numbers with several other students. You can also tweet questions to our class.

Let me know if you have any questions or concerns: You are always welcome to visit me during my office hours (offline: Thurs. 12:45-2 or online via twitter: Wed. 12-1). If you can't make my office hours, you can email me (puot0002@umn.edu) or tweet me (@gwssprof) with your questions or to set up another time.

Be an active and respectful participant in class: Your participation is crucial to the success of the class. To that end, you are responsible for coming to class fully prepared, actively and respectfully contributing to discussions, listening attentively to others' ideas and experiences, asking questions when you don't understand the material and giving me feedback on what is working and not working in the class. You can also post questions/comments on our course blog or twitter feed.

Hand in all assignments on time: Complete all work on time. "On time" means at the beginning of the class period on the particular due date (hard copy) and by 11 PM online on the particular due date (blog/twitter assignments). Due dates are final and non-negotiable. Exceptions will only be granted in extreme circumstances. All due dates will be posted on our course blog on the [**course information page**](#). **All assigned work must be completed in order to pass the class.**

Check the blog on a regular basis: We will be using our course blog a lot in this class. If possible, make sure to bookmark it on your computer. You must check it regularly to read what other students in the course have to say about the readings, topics, and feminist debates. You should also check it to read any announcements from class (like revised assignments) or to download handouts. I will also frequently post my notes or reflections on the topic/readings.

Don't procrastinate: At the end of every semester, I ask students to give advice to future students. One of the most popular suggestions is: don't procrastinate. The readings, papers, and blog assignments always take more time than you think so don't wait until the last minute to do them.

SOME THOUGHTS ON BLOGGING AND TWITTER

[**Our course blog**](#) will play a central role in our class. I will use it to post announcements, class summaries, assignments, and handouts. You will be using it to complete several of your assignments and to engage and develop connections with your class members and instructors. To help you become familiar with the blog, I will provide training sessions on how to use the blog in the Rachel Raimist Feminist Media Center (Ford 468) on the second day of class and post an online tutorial. Throughout the semester, I will include more blog training and discussion during class time and I will be available for blog training sessions upon request. Finally, I hope to enlist some class members to serve as technology mentors to other students. If you are familiar with blogging at the U (on UThink) and are willing to help others, please let me know.

We will also be using **twitter** (a class list and a hashtag). I will be using it to post announcements and hold virtual office hours. And you will be using it to post links, ask questions, connect with other students, and experiment with expressing ideas succinctly. I will provide a brief tutorial (in person and online) on how to sign up for twitter and use it for class engagement.

OTHER IMPORTANT INFORMATION

Academic Dishonesty Academic integrity is essential to a positive teaching and learning environment. All students enrolled in University courses are expected to complete coursework responsibilities with fairness and honesty. Failure to do so by seeking unfair advantage over others or misrepresenting someone else's work as your own, can result in disciplinary action. The University Student Conduct Code defines scholastic dishonesty as follows:

SCHOLASTIC DISHONESTY: submission of false records of academic achievement; cheating on assignments or examinations; plagiarizing; altering, forging, or misusing a University academic record; taking, acquiring, or using test materials without faculty permission; acting alone or in cooperation with another to falsify records or to obtain dishonestly grades, honors, awards, or professional endorsement. Within this course, a student responsible for scholastic dishonesty can be assigned a penalty up to an including an "F" or "N" for the course. If you have any questions regarding the expectations for a specific assignment or exam, ask.

University of Minnesota 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. Click [here](#) for more information.

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, contact the [University Office of Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#).

COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Overview

Class Participation	20%
Blog and Twitter Engagement	45%
In class Presentations	20%
Final Wrap-up	15%

Assignment Description

The bulk of your assignments this semester (blog entries, blog participation, tweets, 4 presentations and your final wrap-up) will be organized around the development of and participation in our class blog (<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/puot0002/quet2011>) and with our class twitter hashtag (#quet2011). 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 (or you and 1 other class member) 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.

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 15 minute) **presentation** on your topic on the day that we are explicitly reading about and discussing it, **two** (roughly 15 minute) **presentations** on your topic/blog participation--one around midterm and the other during the final week of class, and **one presentation** on a queer this! example. More information about these presentations will be posted on our blog soon.

ACTIVISM	9/27
COALITION-BUILDING	9/29
NEOLIBERALISM	10/4
GENDER	10/20
THE ABJECT	10/25
RESISTING/REJECTING	11/1
BODIES	11/8
NORMS	11/10
FAILURE	11/17
NATION/CITIZEN	11/29
YOUTH	12/1
SURVIVING/THRIVING	12/6

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)

Halberstam, Judith. *The Queer Art of Failure*

Bornstein, Kate and S. Bear Bergman. *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation*

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

To access moodle, go to myU. Then click on My Courses. Click on the moodle link for our course (GWSS 4403 or GLBT 4403).

*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 (subject to change)**SEPTEMBER****6 Introductions to course and each other****8 Blog Cluster: Queering DML****Readings:**

- Boyd, Hannah. "The Politics of Queering Anything" (read post and closely skim comments)
<http://www.zephoria.org/thoughts/archives/2011/03/24/the-politics-of-queering-anything.html>
- MCWilliams, Jenna. "Some Thoughts on Queering DML" (read post and closely skim comments)
<http://www.jennamcwilliams.com/2011/03/28/some-thoughts-on-queering-dml/>
- Barnett, Fiona. "Queer DML"
<http://hastac.org/blogs/fionab/queerdml>

Begin class in Rachel Raimist Feminist Media Center (FORD 468)

13 Queer/ing Blogging**Readings:**

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

optional:

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

15 Contingent Belongings**Readings:**

- Handhardt, Christina B. "Butterflies, Whistles, and Fists: Gay Safe Streets Patrols and the New Gay Ghetto, 1976-1981" (moodle)
- Handhardt, Christina B. "Gay Mean Street"
<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2011/08/10/gay-main-street>

CONFERENCE: Contingent Belongings: Queer Reflections on Race, Space and the StateFriday, 9/16-Saturday, 9/17. See more here: <http://contingentbelongings.wordpress.com>

Earn extra credit by attending and posting your thoughts and/or live-tweeting!

20 (queer) blogging in the academy**Readings:**

- Gregg, Melissa. "Feeling Ordinary: Blogging as Conversational Scholarship" (moodle)
- Bryson, Mary, Lori MacIntosh, Sharalyn Jordan and Hui-Ling Lin. "Virtually Queer? Homing Devices, Mobility, and Un/Belongings" (moodle)

INTRODUCTION: What is queering?

22 What is queer/ing pedagogy?**Readings:**

- Luhmann, Susanne. "Queering/querying pedagogy" (moodle)
- Kumashiro, Kevin. Excerpt from *Troubling Education* (moodle)

27 What is queering theory, part 1?**Readings:**

- Smith, Cherry. "What is This Thing Called Queer?" (moodle)
- Berlant, Lauren and Elizabeth Freeman. "From 'Queer Nationality'" (moodle)
- Sullivan, Nikki. "Queer:A Matter of Being or Doing?" (moodle)

PRESENTATION ON ACTIVISM

29 What is queering theory, part 2?**Readings:**

- Cohen, Cathy J. "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens:The Radical Potential Of Queer Politics" (moodle)

PRESENTATION ON COALITION-BUILDING

OCTOBER**4 What is queering theory, part 3?****Readings:**

- Smith,Andrea. "Queer Theory and Native Studies:The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism" (moodle)

PRESENTATION ON NEOLIBERALISM

INTRODUCTION: Who is Judith Butler?**6 ...as a Person****Readings:**

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

FILM: clips from *Judith Butler: Philosophical Encounters of the Third Kind* and *Examined Life***11 ...as a Difficult Writer****Readings:**

- Butler, Judith. "A Bad Writer Writes Back"
<https://pantherfile.uwm.edu/wash/www/butler.htm>
- Butler, Judith. Excerpt from "Value of Difficulty" (moodle)

- Salih, Sara. "Judith Butler and the Ethics of Difficulty" (moodle)
 - Interview with Judith Butler. "Changing the Subject" (moodle)

I3 ...as a Queer Theorist

Readings:

- Butler, Judith. "1990 and 1999 Preface" (moodle)
 - Osbourne/Segal. "Gender as Performance: An Interview with Judith Butler"
<http://www.theory.org.uk/but-int1.htm>

18 ...as a troublemaker

Readings:

- Judith Butler Refuses Prize at Berlin CSD 2010
<http://nohomonationalism.blogspot.com/2010/06/judith-butler-refuses-berlin-pride.html>
 - Transcript of Butler's refusal speech
<http://www.egs.edu/faculty/judith-butler/articles/i-must-distance-myself>
 - Where Now? From Pride Scandal to Transnational Movement
<http://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2010/06/26/where-now-from-pride-scandal-to-transnational-movement>
 - Butler I, Homonationalism 0
<http://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2010/06/21/judith-butler-i-homonationalism-0>
 - Celebrating Refusal
<http://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2010/06/23/celebrating-refusal-the-complexities-of-saying-no>
 - Angela Davis' youtube response
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T0BzKCRgnj8>

QUEERING THROUGH/BESIDE/AGAINST BUTLER: Some Key Terms

20 GENDER

Readings:

- Butler, Judith. "Chapter 1: Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire" (moodle)

PRES^TATION ON GENDER

25 ABJECT

- Butler, Judith. "Bodily Inscriptions, Performative Subversions" in *Gender Trouble*, 175-183
 - Allison, Dorothy. "A Question of Class" (moodle)

PRESENTATION ON ABJECT

27 Midterm Check-in

NOVEMBER

I RESISTING as PARODY/RESIGNIFICATION

Readings:

- Foucault, Michel. "Method" in *The History of Sexuality, Volume I* (moodle)
- Butler, Judith. "From Parody to Politics" in *Gender Trouble*, 194-204 (moodle)
- Buter, Judith. "Critically Queer" (moodle)
- 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>

3 RESISTING as DIS-sing: Disidentification and Disavowal**Readings:**

- Muñoz, José Esteban. "Introduction: Performing Disidentification" in *Disidentifications: queers of color and the performance of Politics* (moodle)

PRESENTATION ON RESISTANCE

8 PRECARIOUSNESS**Readings:**

- Butler, Judith. Excerpts from *Precarious Life* and *Undoing Gender* (moodle)
- Butler, Judith. "Remarks on 'Queer Bonds'" (moodle)

PRESENTATION ON BODIES

10 NORMS**Readings:**

- Warner, Michael. "Normal and Normaller" (moodle)
- Warner, Michael and Lauren Berlant. "Sex in Public" (moodle)
- Butler, Judith. Excerpts from *Undoing Gender* (moodle)

PRESENTATION ON NORMS

15/17 Another Judith...Halberstam**Readings:**

- Halberstam, Judith. *The Queer Art of Failure*

PRESENTATION ON FAILURE on November 17

22/24 NO CLASS: THANKSGIVING**29 TROUBLE: Being(s) in Trouble?****Readings:**

- Chávez, Karma. "Spatializing Gender Performativity: Ecstasy and Possibilities for Livable Life in the Tragic Case of Victoria Arellano" (moodle)
- Diablog on Chávez from queering ethics course
<http://blog.lib.umn.edu/puot0002/queerethics/2011/02/ecstasy-possibility-resignification.html>

Clips from *Cruel and Unusual*

PRESENTATION ON NATION/CITIZEN

DECEMBER

1/6 TROUBLE: Making Trouble

Readings:

- Bornstein, Kate and S. Bear Bergman. Selections from *Gender Outlaws: The Next Generation*

PRESENTATION ON YOUTH ON 12/1

PRESENTATION ON SURVIVING/THRIVING ON 12/6

8 Wrap-up and class presentations

13 Wrap-up and class presentations