

## QUEER/ING ETHICS GWSS 8190 \* Spring 2011

FORD 400  
Tuesdays 2:00-4:30

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### Course Description

In this graduate seminar we will use the work of Judith Butler to explore the tension between developing a queer ethics and engaging in the queering of ethics. Some general questions that will guide our discussion include: *What does/should ethics do? What can we do with ethics? What does ethics do to us? Is a queer ethics possible? Desirable? Necessary?*

In the first part of the course, we will engage in some broader explorations of the ethical import of Butler's work and some (dis)connections between ethics and queer/ing. We will trace Butler's ethical "evolution," critically reflect on the ethical imperative to be "good," and do some queer things with norms. In the second part of the course, we will focus our attention on one chapter from Butler's *Undoing Gender*: "Beside Oneself: On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy." In addition to doing a very close reading of it, we will use the chapter to guide our critical exploration of and queer experimentation with some ethical thinkers and approaches. In particular, we will use Butler's notion of beside as a way to position queer/ing in relation to Levinas, Kant, Feminist Care Ethics, Virtue Ethics and Bioethics.

### Course Requirements

Participation	200 points
Diablog	200 points
Blog Participation	100 points
Twitter Assignments	50 points
Class Notes	50 points
Final Project	400 points

### **Diablog (dialogue + blog = diablog) 200 points**

You and one other class member are required to engage in an online dialogue via our blog and twitter. You will sign up to discuss one of the course readings. Over the course of one week you will each post summaries of the reading and then post comments, follow-up entries and/or tweet responses to each other. Then you will be responsible for our class discussion. Finally, you

will post a collaborative summary of your diablog. Here's a breakdown of point totals for this assignment:

- Initial summary blog entry = 40 points
- Follow up posts = 60 points earned through combination of entries (@20 pts), comments (@10 pts) and tweets (@ 5 pts) [example: 1 entry + 3 comments + 2 tweets]
- Class presentation/discussion = 50 points
- Collective summary = 50 points

### **Blog Participation**

**100 points**

(5 posts @20 points each) You are required to make 5 posts (entries and/or comments) on our course blog.

- 2 Comment responses on open thread discussions
- 3 Your choice (comments or entries)

### **Twitter Participation**

**50 points**

(10 points @ 5 points each) You are required to post (at least) 10 tweets on twitter.

- 4 Tweet reflecting on your big project
- 6 Your choice tweets

### **Class notes**

**50 points**

You are required to take notes for one class session and post them on our course blog. **Do not simply post a transcript of our discussion.** Instead, try to be creative in your presentation of these notes. Spend some time thinking about how to summarize, organize, and synthesize the key points of our discussion. The purpose of your notes is to **document and archive** our discussion and the process of critically and creatively engaging with the authors and their ideas for your chosen week **from your perspective**. Your notes do not have to be comprehensive, so focus your energy on answering this question: *What do I want to remember from this discussion?* (Instead of this question: *What all was said/discussed?*)

**Note:** Another possible option for this assignment is to live tweet our class. Instead of taking notes and posting them later, you would be responsible for tweeting thoughts, questions, comments and/or reactions to this class as it was happening.

### **Final Project**

**400 points**

There are no specific requirements for this project. You are encouraged to be creative and think about what sort of project would best serve your own needs in this course. You could do a research paper, a video project, an interactive literature review, a portfolio (complete with summaries of each reading + detailed introduction and conclusion), your own blog, or whatever else you think might be helpful. I will meet with each of you individually to develop your project. As part of this project, you must post regular blog/twitter updates on your process/ing. Here's the breakdown:

- **100 points** 4 blog posts (4 @ 25 points each) reporting on your final project. You can write about your plans for the project, post questions about your topic, ask for advice/feedback, critically engage with some of your sources, reflect on the process of working on/with your project
- **300 points** Your final project

### Course Readings:

All readings will be posted as downloadable pdfs on our WebVista site. If desired, I can also create a course packet through Paradigm copies of the readings. Access WebVista through [MyU](#). Click on MyCourses and then GWSS 8190. Log in and then click on our class. Readings are filed under the week in which they are discussed.

**Course Schedule:** Subject to Change

**jan 18            Introduction to Class**

**jan 25            Queer Pedagogies and Productions**

### Reading:

- Luhmann, Suzanne. "Queering/Querying Pedagogy"
- Shahani, Nishant G. "Pedagogical Practices and the Reparative Performance of Failure, or, 'What does [Queer] Knowledge do?'"
- Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky. "Paranoid Reading and Reparative Reading, Or, You're so Paranoid, You Probably Think This Essay Is About You"

**feb 1            Resisting Morality and the call to be good**

### Reading:

- Butler, Judith. "Ethical Ambivalence"
- Butler, Judith. "Preface to *Gender Trouble*" in *Gender Trouble*
- Frye, Marilyn. "A Response to Lesbian Ethics: Why Ethics?"
- Califia, Patrick. "Introduction: Or is it always right to rebel?" from *Public Sex*

**feb 8            Judith Butler's Ethical "Evolution"?**

### Reading:

- Butler, Judith. "1999 Preface" in *Gender Trouble*
- Butler, Judith. "Introduction: Acting in Concert" in *Undoing Gender*
- Butler, Judith. Excerpt from "Violence, Mourning and Politics" in *Precarious Life*
- Butler, Judith. Excerpts from "An Account of Oneself" in *Giving an Account of Oneself*

**feb 15            Norms, Normativity and Aspiration**

### Reading:

- Jakobsen, Janet. "Queer Is? Queer Does? Normativity and the Problem of Resistance"
- Taylor, Dianna. "Normativity and Normalization"

- Butler, Judith. “The Question of Social Transformation” in *Undoing Gender*
- Ahmed, Sara. Excerpt from *The Promise of Happiness*

## **BESIDE: SOME ETHICAL LOCATIONS**

### **feb 22      On some meanings of beside/s**

#### **Reading:**

- Butler, Judith. “Beside Oneself: On the Limits of Sexual Autonomy”
- Chávez, Karma R. “Spatializing Gender Performativity: Ecstasy and Possibilities for Livable Life in the Tragic Case of Victoria Arellano”

### **march 1      Beside(s) Levinas: On precariousness and non-violence**

#### **Reading:**

- Mills, Catherine. “Normative Violence, Vulnerability and Responsibility”
- Jenkins, Fiona. “Toward a Nonviolent Ethics: A Response to Catherine Mills”
- Butler, Judith. “Reply from Judith Butler to Mills and Jenkins”

### **march 8      Besides**

#### **Reading:**

TBA

### **march 15      Spring Break**

### **march 22      Beside(s) Kant: On dignity and humanity**

#### **Reading:**

- Cornell, Drucilla. “Autonomy Re-Imagined”
- Kant, Immanuel. Excerpt from *On the Critique of Pure Reason*
- Rubin, Gayle. Excerpt from “Thinking Sex”
- Warner, Michael. Excerpt from “The Ethics of Shame”
- Nashani, Dave. “Between Queer Ethics and Morality”

### **march 29      Beside a feminist ethics of care: forms of and resistances to caring**

#### **Reading:**

- Tronto, Joan. Excerpt from *Moral Boundaries*
- Cooper, Davina. “‘Well, you go there to get off.’ Visiting feminist care ethics through a women’s bathhouse”
- Hines, Sally. Excerpt from *Transforming Gender: Transgender practices of identity, intimacy and caring*
- Jeppesen, Sandra. “Queer anarchist autonomous zones and publics: Direct action vomiting against homonormative consumerism”

**april 5      Beside virtue: on critique and troublestaying**

**Reading:**

- Foucault, Michel. "What is Enlightenment?"
- Foucault, Michel. "The Masked Philosopher"
- Foucault, Michel. "What is Critique?"
- Butler, Judith. "On the Virtue of Critique"
- Dr. Seuss. *Horton Hears a Who* (book and film versions)

**april 12      Beside Aristotle: On flourishing and the "good" life**

**Reading:**

- Aristotle. Excerpts from *Nicomachean Ethics*
- Tessman, Lisa. Excerpt from *Burdened Virtues*.
- Butler, Judith. "Precarious Life"
- Ahmed, Sara. Excerpt from *The Promise of Happiness*

**april 19      Beside bioethics: What counts as life?**

**Reading:**

- Excerpts from *Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire*
- Diedrich, Lisa. "A bioethics of failure: Anti-heroic cancer narratives"
- Diedrich, Lisa. Excerpt from *Treatments*

**april 26      Besides**

**Reading:**

TBA

**may 4      Final wrap-up**