

Introduction to Queer Studies, Fall 2020

Tufts University, Women's, Gender, and Sexuality Studies

M & W, 10:30 – 11:45am



[Homoland by Julio Salgado]

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Office Hours: Mon 11:45am—12:15pm, or by appointment

Is queer a state of being, a lens for seeing the world, or a way to relate to others? This usefully unstable idea, “queer,” can offer us strategies to negotiate an unequal and violent sociopolitical landscape. Queer studies provides tools that destabilize some of the things we take for granted everyday—gender, sex, sexuality, desire, body, pleasure. But even as it troubles known categories, it does not necessarily discount the material effects of these frameworks through which we know and engage with the world. For example, even if we agree that “gender is a construct,” gender continues to be an organizing principle that regulates how we can move through the world; it affects our daily experience, life trajectories, and even our life expectancy. Queer Studies thus asks us to think both through the theoretical natures of gender and sexuality, and the material experience of them.

Our conversations will attend to how normativity can restrict pleasure and self-making, resulting in many kinds of violence. At the same time, we will see that cultural expression by gender and sexual dissidents is hardly stifled by such disciplinary forces. This class leans toward a cultural studies approach, thinking about how we interpret culture as queer, and how queer people make culture. We will meet in our texts and videos Asian drag artists, call center workers in the Philippines, Black and Latinx ball queens, sex tourists in Brazil, F.I.E.R.C.E. activists in NYC, and dancing aunties. They will help us think about how gender and sexuality matter at the level of politics, culture, and society, and why race, colonialism, disability, and class matter to thinking about queer.

We will also study queerly. If studying gender and sexuality can provide new ways of looking at the world, what would it mean to bring our gender and sexuality into an engagement with assigned material, or into the classroom? How can we know through desire and sensation? We will use creative activities—writing with prompts, improvisation, group work—to open up conversations relevant to texts in order to take pleasure in analysis.

OBJECTIVES & OUTCOMES

Over the course of the semester, you will develop and apply skills in cultural analysis, using queer studies as a tool to think about social and political phenomena. You will learn about the diversity of lifestyles, experiences, public figures, and histories that fall under the category “queer.” You will have the opportunity to think about your own identities, bodies, and socio-political location within larger conversations about nationhood, gender, and privilege.

COMMUNICATION

If you have any problems concerning the course, if you want to better prepare for assignments, or for any other issues related to this class, please don't hesitate to attend Whitney or my office hours, or reach out to us via email to set up a meeting. We want to make sure you get the most out of this class! Also, if you decide to drop this course at any point please have a conversation with me before you do, or at least notify us when you do. Please do not expect same-day responses to emails sent after 7pm or on weekends, and include a greeting and sign off in all emails.

REQUIRED READINGS / VIEWINGS

All readings are available via Canvas, as PDFs or weblinks—access the files via *modules* not in the files folder. Please check before accessing a link if I have designated *specific* pages to read; you won't always have to read the entire PDF so check beforehand. In addition to readings are several films for viewing as well, some streaming via Canvas and others on Kanopy. I have estimated between 2 to 4 hours of preparation per class and have allocated readings / viewings accordingly. Don't wait till the last minute to prepare for class. All reading and viewing to be done before coming to class each day; take notes or highlight texts accordingly so that you are prepared to discuss them.

ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION, TECHNOLOGY

Attendance is expected at all classes—30% of your grade counts on you being present and active. I understand that the current conditions, particularly technology issues, illness, grief, and depression, may make it difficult to attend regularly. I ask that you keep in regular contact with Whitney and me if you are unable to come to class or submit assignments on time—we will do our best to find asynchronous alternatives to balance your opportunities for learning. This is a discussion-based class, and so we expect active participation from all of you. If speaking is a challenge for you, you're welcome to type comments into the chat too. If two or three classes go by and I haven't heard from you, I will invite you to contribute to the conversation. It would greatly help if you kept your cameras on throughout class. If you don't feel comfortable keeping them on, it would be helpful if you could use an avatar add-on or use a photo of yourself so that there is some version of you present in the space. If speaking is a challenge for you, you're welcome to type comments into the chat too. The software “Loomie” is one example of an avatar add-on for Windows and Mac; please reach out if you have questions. Please do your best to limit distractions while you're in class: keep your phone silent / notifications off, avoid social media windows etc. Also note that there is no recording or screen grabbing. If you are observing any religious holidays during our class dates, please let us know. You're free to miss the class session; you'll be expected to submit a 2-page response paper with a week of the class in order to show that you've done the assigned readings.

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

The classroom is a place for dialogue across intellectual and identitarian difference; I am committed to making sure that all students can pursue their interests and engage with materials in an environment that is supportive and healthy. Class materials will at various points address transphobic violence, antiblackness, suicide, intergenerational sex, and global warfare. I will offer content warnings in advance when I can, however I want to be clear that I have not included anything on this syllabus to be harmful or controversial. I think all these materials offer some source of possibility or restoration, even as they document social and systemic violence. I hope you will see the classroom as a place to ask new questions and hone your thinking skills. I ask us to respect each other's differences, and also grant each other grace to make mistakes. We must own and acknowledge our privileges, and be humble enough to apologize when our language offends. I also ask us to be aware of how we take up space and time in the class; be sure to share airtime and to direct your comments and questions to your peers and not just to Whitney and me.

ACADEMIC INTEGRITY

Your writing should consist of *your* own ideas, words, and information you have collated. When you are quoting or referencing a resource other than your own work, please make this is evident using citations. You are expected to be familiar with the **Tufts University academic integrity guidelines**: <https://students.tufts.edu/student-affairs/student-life-policies/academic-integrity-policy>

ACADEMIC SUPPORT

If the reading or writing assignments prove to be challenging (and they should be!) I want to encourage you to seek help. There's always room to grow and skills to be learned, and there should be no stigma attached to getting support. You're always welcome to talk to me about these things, and also know that there is a Student Student Accessibility and Academic Resource Center available to you: go.tufts.edu/StAARCenter will have information on how to make an appointment to work on any writing-related project or assignment, attend subject tutoring in a variety of disciplines, or meet with an academic coach to hone time management skills.

ACCOMODATIONS

We each arrive to the classroom with different learning needs and it is my intention to create as supportive an environment as possible. If you do need accommodations based on disability, please meet with me as soon as possible, and also visit the StAAR Center (formerly Student Accessibility Services) website at <https://students.tufts.edu/starr-center> for further support. You can contact StaarCenter@tufts.edu or 617-627-4539 to make an appointment with an accessibility representative.

EVALUATION

15% - Manifesto
20% - InstaQueer
30% - Exams
35% - Participation and attendance

ASSIGNMENTS

A body manifesto (due Monday Oct 19)

Following our sections on "what is gender?" "what is sex?" and "what is a body?" you will have the opportunity to locate yourself in these conversations by creating a manifesto for the body—your body, the body politic, the body of the nation, bodies, etc. Usually understood as a 'public declaration of policy and aims,' a manifesto of this kind is an opportunity for you to tell speak to the body, tell the body what you know of it, how you intend to treat it, enter into agreements with it, and to ask of it what you will. Implicit here is that you will draw on / invoke / re-tool / refuse some of the queer understandings we've come to about sex, gender, and body from our readings. From bullet points to poetry, from a plain typed text to a more graphically curated presentation, the form is up to you. Videos, powerpoints, collages, audio recordings, posters are also welcome. Please keep time-based pieces under 5 minutes, and written documents under 1500 words.

This exercise is an opportunity for you to develop a stake in the class themes and readings. Hopefully these first three weeks of readings help you remember, clarify, or imagine how bodies (their shapes, desires, meanings, importance) have been created through particular norms, habits, histories, and forms of discipline. I am interested both in the content of your work, and the format you choose to present it in... what will your manifesto look like and how will it match (or contradict) the mood you are creating with your manifesto? There are two days allocated to show off your body manifestos to your colleagues—this is optional, but I hope you take pride in your work and present it in class.

InstaQueer (due by Friday 5pm of every week):

We will, as a class, maintain an Instagram account, @QueerStudiesTufts. You are expected to make a post every week. You can make memes out of class readings; use class readings or ideas from the texts as captions to GIFs, videos, pop-culture or historic images; use puppies, penguins, or llamas to say insightful things; capture captioned screenshots from Netflix/Hulu; you can make your own videos, mashups, parodies; post images referenced in texts or videos; post screenshots of current or old news and tabloids; the possibilities are endless... but the relationship to assigned material and class discussions must be relevant and clear. Captions, hashtags, and geotags are also significant parts of your submission and should be employed carefully. You are each expected to produce a post at the end of every week (beginning week of Sept 14) by Saturday at noon. If you do not want to post content to Instagram yourself, we have solutions, please check in with Whitney or me.

This exercise functions as a weekly "response paper" would in any other class. I'm looking for how you capture and translate ideas from the assignments into your own vision and aesthetic. This is also a chance to bring queer studies out from the ivory tower and make it widely available. Do not stress if your design skills are awful... that too is an aesthetic, use it to your advantage. Please be sure to hashtag your initials or a moniker of some kind so I can keep track of your submissions.

Take home exams

At the beginning of the semester, I will share six exam questions, you need to answer **only two** over the course of the semester, and there are three opportunities to submit exams (Mon Oct 12; Fri Nov 6; Wed Dec 9). You should submit one answer at a time. I've arranged the exams this way 1) to accommodate any extended absence you may have to take from class, 2) provide the opportunity for you to get feedback on your writing early on and re-do an exam, 3) to be done with the semester when classes are over so that you can focus on other final exams. Each exam is timed with a "check in" day, so that you have more space/time to dedicate to writing. The questions will ask you to synthesize major themes and ideas encountered in the class. Each answer should be four to five pages long (double spaced, 1 inch margins, make sure your name is on the document, and that each essay has a title).

CALENDAR

Wednesday September 9 – Introductions

Ravyn Wngz, for BLM Toronto

Lauren Michele Jackson – We need to talk about digital blackface?

Monday September 14 – Normativity, Power, & Difference

Gayle Rubin – Charmed Circle

Keywords for American Studies – Normal

Third World Gay Revolution – What we want, what we believe

Wednesday September 16 – Normativity, Power, & Difference

Sage Dictionary of Cultural Studies: Power, Hegemony, Ideological State Apparatus

Cherrie Moraga – La Guera

TSQ - LGBT

Kevin Henderson, Joe Fischel – Four Ways to Escape a Sex Panic

Monday September 21 – What is Gender?

Judith Butler – Gender Trouble (p.190-192)

Marlon Bailey – Ain't Nothing Like a Butch Queen (p. 29-55)

C. Winter Han & Spencer Kornhaber – The Fierceness of 'Femme, Fat, and Asian'

Natalie Morn – What K-Pop's Beautiful Men...

Wednesday September 23 – What is Gender?

Dean Spade – Mutilating Gender

C. Riley Snorton – A New Hope (p. 84-88 only)

Caleb Luna – The gender non-conformity of my fatness

Monday September 28 – What is sex? (Yom Kippur)

Buzzfeed – What it's like to be intersex

TSQ – Intersex, Transition

Siobahn Somerville – Scientific Racism and the Homosexual Body (p.18-29)

Wednesday September 30 – What is sex?

C. Jacob Hale – Leatherdyke boys and their daddies (p.223-224 ...daddies + 226-231 ...skins)

Marlon Bailey – Black gay raw sex

Mary Weismantel - Moche Sex Pots

Monday October 5 – What is a body?

Dana Luciano & Mel Chen – Has the queer ever been human (p.182 – 186)

Amber Musser – Objects of Desire (p.1-7)

Xandra Ibarra – Spic Ecdysis

Wednesday October 7 – How useful is identity?

Ellen Samuels – My Body, My Closet

Jason Ritchie – How do you say 'Come out of the closet' in Arabic?

Monday October 12 – Indigenous People's Day – Catch up and check-in, exam 1 due

Wednesday Oct 14 – Eleganza, Extravaganza!

Kareem Khubchandani – Aunty Fever

Paris is Burning

Jesús I. Valles – I'd like to keep it on please

Monday Oct 19 – Queers making things

Brown Girls (7 episodes)

Tavia Nyong'o – Too black, too queer

Roy Perez – Mark Aguhar's critical flippancy

Heather Greene – An interview with artist and activist Ricardo Gamboa

Wednesday Oct 21 - Making things queer

Keeping it 101 – Ru-ligion Ru-vealed

Gayatri Gopinath – Queering Bollywood

Elsbeth Brown & Sara Davidmann – Queering the Trans Family Album

Monday October 26 – Have we always been queer?

Gloria Anzaldua – Movimientos de rebeldia y las culturas que traicionan

Chris Finely – Decolonizing the queer native body

Joe Jimenez – El Abuelo

Wednesday October 28 - When was queer?

Cheryl Dunye – Watermelon Woman

Nayan Shah – The uses of history

Sylvia Rivera – Queens in Exile, The Forgotten Ones

Drunk History – Marsha P. Johnson Sparks the Stonewall Riots

Monday November 2 – Queer Nations / Queer States

Karma Chavez – Queer Migration Politics

Senthuron Raj – Asylum and Sexual Orientation

Margot Canaday – Building a Straight State

Wednesday November 4 – Catch up and check-in

Mykki Blanco recites "I want a Dyke for President" by Zoe Leonard

Friday November 6 – Exam 2 due

Monday November 9 – Where is queer?

Noe Lopez – Interview

Mary Gray – Excerpts

Ghassan Moussawi – Disruptive Situations

Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai – Monster, Terrorist, Fag (p.117-130)

Tuesday November 10 – What is a safe space?

Benji Hart – The anti-blackness of...

Justin Torres – In Praise of Latin Night

Christina Hanhardt – Canaries of the creative age

Wednesday November 11 – No class

Monday November 16 – Visit from The History Project

Monday November 18 – Body Manifesto Presentations

Monday November 23 – The Price of Queer

Greg Mitchell – Turboconsumers in Paradise

Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner – Sex in Public

Emmanuel David – Capital T

Wednesday November 25 - No class

Monday November 30 - Queer Protest

Sara Warner – Preface to *Acts of Gaiety*

Debanuj Dasgupta --

Johannesburg gay pride pits politics against partying

Omise'eke Natasha Tinsely – Let's Celebrate Trans Women's Lives, Not Deaths

Wednesday December 2 – Queer Viralities

Shay Dior – Contaminated by Racism

Marlon Riggs – Tongues Untied

Jih-Fei Cheng – How to Survive

Monday December 7 – Queer Beauty

Sins Invalid

Blaqueer – Why Selfies

Mark Aguhar - Litanies to my heavenly brown body

Butches Leaning on things

Mia Mingus – Moving toward the ugly

Wednesday December 9 – Check in & wrap up, exam 3 due.