

# FEMINIST, QUEER, & TRANS PERFORMANCE



Rashaad Newsome: still from FIVE

Tufts University, Theatre, Dance, and Performance Studies  
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Fall 2020 | Wednesdays 1:30 – 4:30pm | Office hours by appointment

## COURSE DESCRIPTION

If gender and sexuality, as embodied social categories, significantly inform how we become legible, how and to what ends do performers use bodies and their environments to transform, question, obscure, and expand what we understand as human, or even a body? This class draws on critical race, disability, indigenous, and postcolonial scholars who ask how power, pleasure, and violence are distributed and accessed via the management of gender and sexuality. It pairs these critical texts with artistic works to examine how queer, trans, and feminist theories are made in the flesh.

## OBJECTIVES AND OUTCOMES

- \* To introduce students to feminist, queer, and trans studies
- \* To understand the relationships between these fields and performance studies
- \* To make clear how minoritarian subjects, especially artists, use performance to critique, work, make pleasure, and survive
- \* To speak and write art criticism beautifully and evocatively

- \* To apply theories learned in class to contemporary artists / artworks
- \* To understand artists *as* theorists
- \* To make theories learned in class useful to students' own research projects
- \* To provide an opportunity for students to invest in and explore the oeuvre of a contemporary artist

## COMMUNICATION

If you have any problems concerning the course, if there are particular topics you are excited by and want to talk more about, if you want to better prepare for assignments, or for any other issues related to this class, please don't hesitate to schedule an appointment. I want to make sure you get the most out of this class.

## REQUIRED TEXTS

Most of our texts are available as PDFs or links via modules. There are three required books:

Mark Rifkin: *When Did Indians Become Straight?*

Omiseke Natasha Tinsley: *Ezili's Mirrors*

Kareem Khubchandani: *Ishtyle*

## ATTENDANCE, PARTICIPATION, TECHNOLOGY

Attendance is mandatory at all classes; please let me know in advance if you plan to be absent otherwise your absence will affect your overall grade. This is a discussion-based class, and so I expect active participation from all of you. Given the challenges of the Zoom environment, I'll regularly use breakout sessions to provide opportunities for you all to spend some time talking with each other.

## 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. I ask us to respect each other, and grant each other grace to make mistakes. 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 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 sure 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 an Academic Resource Center available to you:

<https://students.tufts.edu/staar-center>

## ACCOMMODATIONS

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. You can also look to the StAAR website for further support: <https://students.tufts.edu/staar-center/accessibility-services>

## ASSIGNMENTS

**Weekly:** Ruminations (1-2 pages double spaced) (Weeks 1-7, 11, 12, 14).

Due Tuesday before class by 10pm

These weekly ruminations should take up one word, line, or quote from any of the assigned materials, and think deeply with it. What does it open up for you, how does it become useful to you, what are its multiplicities, possibilities and limitations? What does it sound, look, and feel like? Your rumination should be elegantly written, and thoroughly proofread.

**Manifesto:** A live oral performance response to the week's text (Weeks 3-7). This manifesto should find an investment, build a set of claim, envision alternative possibilities. The world you speak to, the concerns you draw on, should show a clear connection to the themes emerging from the texts. These should be 2 – 5 minutes.

**Remanifestation:** A re-performance of the manifesto, re-interpreted in whatever aesthetic medium most suits your goals. Between 2 - 10 minutes.

**Artist teach in:**

A 20-min video (uploaded to media gallery) introducing us to an artist, their biography, oeuvre, aesthetic styles, reception, and theoretical interventions. You may want to focus on one or two pieces or projects to analyze. The format of the video (using zoom or iMovie, appearing on screen, just narrating while showing images) is up to you. How best can you teach us about this artist, what their work looks and feels like, and what critical perspectives they offer through their work. How are scholars writing about this scholar, what do they hone in on, and what theories do they proffer based on the artwork? Due Nov 1, 11:59pm.

For undergraduate students:

**Final Project - Artist teach in II:** See above.

**Final Project for TPS graduate students - Annotated bibliography:** Assemble an annotated bibliography that would assist you in writing about an artist of your choice (different from your artist teach in). What histories would you need to investigate? How would you situate your artist's socio-political position? What themes and theories emerge from their work that you want to read more about? What would you need to know about the genre / form they are working in? What details of their work ask you to focus on very specific aesthetics? This should be accompanied by an artist profile (3 pages); a DIET plan of one of their works (3 pages); and annotated bibliography. The annotated bibliography should have 15 scholarly sources, at least five of which are books. In addition to explaining how the source proves useful to thinking about the artist's work, you should tell us what the argument of the text is, what its objects/archives are, and how it makes its arguments.

## GRADING SCHEME

Weekly ruminations x 10: 20%  
Class participation: 20%  
Artist profile: 20%  
Manifesto / re-manifestation: 15%  
Artist profile II / Annotated bib: 25%

## CALENDAR

Wednesday Sept 9: Fucking Knowledge

Barbara Christian – The Race for Theory  
Eve Sedgwick – Paranoid Reading, Reparative Reading  
Munoz – Evidence as Ephemera  
David Roman – Critical Generosity  
Matt Richardson – Good and Messy

Wednesday Sept 16: Feminist, Queer, and Trans Manifestations + DIET Plan

Yvonne Rainer - No Manifesto (1964)  
Valerie Solanas - SCUM Manifesto (1967) (medium)  
Third World Gay Liberation - What we want, what we believe (1971)  
Combahee River Collective Statement (1977)  
Donna Haraway - Cyborg Manifesto (1985) (long)  
Queer Nation - History is a Weapon (1991)  
Zoe Leonard - I want a Dyke for President (1992)  
Mark Aguhar - Litanies to my heavenly brown body (2011)  
Kai Green and Treva Ellison: Tranifest (2014)  
Rohith Vemula: My birth is my fatal accident (2017) (cw: suicide note)  
Joshua Chambers Letson: The Manifesto of a Communist Party (2018) (long)  
Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez: Second nomination for Bernie Sanders (2020)

Wednesday Sept 23: Unruly Feminisms

Gail Bederman: Not to Sex-But to Race  
Jennifer Nash: Home Truths on Intersectionality  
Saba Mahmood: Agency, Gender, and Embodiment  
Matt Richardson: No More Secrets, No More Lies  
Audre Lorde: Uses of the Erotic  
Sara Ahmed: Killing Joy

Wednesday Sept 30: Queer of Color Criticisms

Cathy Cohen: Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens (452-62)  
Scott Lauria Morgensen: Settler Homonationalism  
Juana Rodriguez: Queer Sociality and Other Sexual Fantasies  
E. Patrick Johnson: Quare Studies  
Mel Chen and Dana Luciano: Has the Queer Ever Been Human?  
Ianna Owen: still, nothing

Wednesday Oct 7: Trans (Studies) Corpus

Sandy Stone: Guerrilla  
Dean Spade: Mutilating Gender  
Susan Stryker: My words to Victor Frankenstein  
Jules Gill Peterson: Trans of Color Critique  
C. Riley Snorton: Devine's Cut  
Emmanuel David: Transgender Archipelagos  
Aren Aizura: Feminine Transformations

Wednesday Oct 14: Feminist, Queer, and Trans Aesthetics

Sue Ellen Case: Toward a Butch/Femme Aesthetic  
Lucas Crawford: A Transgender Poetics of the Highline Park  
Martin Manalansan: The "Stuff" of Archives  
Deborah Vargas: Ruminations on *Lo Sucio*  
Brian Horton: Fashioning Fabulation  
Ato Quayson: Aesthetic Nervousness  
Anna Martine Whitehead: Expressing Life Through Loss

Wednesday Oct 21: Feminist, Queer, and Trans Artists

Colleen Kim Daniher: The Pose as Interventionist Gesture  
Vivian Huang: Inscrutably, Actually  
Clare Croft: Dancing on the edge, in silence  
Christina Leon: Forms of Opacity  
Shoniqua Roach: Black Pussy Power  
Ramon Rivera-Servera: Building Home

Wednesday Oct 28: Writing workshops

Adriana Zavala:

Lilian Mengesha:

AB Brown:

Kemi Adeyemi:

Wednesday Nov 4: Artist teach in

Watch your colleague's videos

Tuesday Nov 10: Artist teach in

Watch your colleague's videos

Wednesday Nov 18 – book

Wednesday Nov 25 – no class

BREAK

Wednesday Dec 2 – book

Wednesday Dec 9 – Remanifestations

Artist to choose from: Mark Aguhar | Felix Gonzalez-Torres | Sunil Gupta | Vaginal Davis  
| Dorian Wood | Kehinde Wiley | Ana Mendiata | Xandra Ibarra | Zulfikar Ali Bhutto  
| Judy Chicago | Lucas Avendano | Deanna Bowen | Post Natyam Collective | Amir  
Baradaran | Alan Pelaez Lopez | Kara Walker | Mickalene Thomas | Anida Yeoh Ali | Loo  
Zihan | Nelisiwe Xaba | Athi-patra Ruga | Micha Cardenas | Rashaad Newsome | Marlon  
Riggs | Kent Monkman | Wu Tsang | Vivek Shraya | Tourmaline | Astrid Hadad | Maya  
Stovall | Tseng Kwong Chi | Jeffrey Gibson | Brendan Fernandes | David Antonio Cruz |  
Trajal Harrel