Course Description

This course is a survey of the critical vocabular and forms of life that comprise the lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual, and two-spirit (LGBTQ+) communities. Although the course will be typically referred to in shorthand as critical queer or critical trans studies, the aim of the coursework (readings and lectures) is broadly construed. We will aim to elaborate the variety of ways that Euro-American culture has constituted the basis for certain racialized and sexualized norms that govern being human. These constitutive features include settler-colonialism and over four centuries what Cedric Robinson called the “primitive accumulation” of labor power generated by and through chattel slavery. To meet the challenges raised by these issues we will investigate the meaning of terms like power, sexuality, racialization, gendered embodiment, logical binarism, gay, lesbian, Blackness, transness, queerness, coalitional feminism, and the flaws with progress narratives of many mainstream or liberal social movements for queer rights (to name just a few of many). This is ambitious. But with an emphasis on class discussion and close reading practices, as well as an eye toward everyday life, our ambitions will yield impressive epistemic dividends.

University of Massachusetts Land Acknowledgement

As an employee of the University of Massachusetts, Amherst, I and the university must accept that its campus was founded and built on the unceded homelands of the Pocumtuc Nation on the land of the Norwrutuck community. We recognize these lands and waters as important Relations with which we are all interconnected and depend on to sustain life and wellbeing. The Pocumtuc had connections with these lands for millennia. Over 400 years of colonization, when Pocumtuc Peoples were displaced, many joined their Algonquian relatives to the east, south, west and north. That includes Mashpee and Aquinnah Wampanoag, Nipmuc, Narragansett, Mohegan, Pequot, Mohican, communities and Abenaki and other nations of the Wabanaki Confederacy. These Native peoples still maintain connections and relationships of care for these lands today. We also acknowledge that the University of Massachusetts Amherst is a Land Grant University. As part of the Morrill Land Grant Act, portions of land from 82 Native Nations west of the Mississippi were sold to provide the resources to found and build this university. As an active first step toward decolonization, I encourage each student to learn more about the Native Nations whose homelands UMass Amherst now resides on and the Indigenous homelands on which you live and work. We also invite you to deepen your relationship to these living lands and waters.
Course Approach, Logistics, Policies

**Course approach:** Recognizing that learning is not an individual endeavor, WGSS 250 will continue to reflect the feminist experiment in building and sustaining intellectual and political communities. (I would like to thank Professor Kiran Asher for this addition to the syllabus.)

**Moodle:** Once you register for the course, you will automatically be added to the course’s Moodle page (https://umass.moonami.com/) and the class email list (wgss-187-01-fal22@groups.umass.edu). Moodle is your first port of entry for instructions, updates, readings, study questions, quizzes, etc. Use your IT username and password to sign into the course Moodle and access course information. Make sure that your university email (yourname@umass.edu) works, and check Moodle regularly. Contact IT (it@umass.edu) if you have any problems.

**Office Hours:** Although the office hours are listed here and updated on Moodle, I do encourage you to stop by with questions about class material, brainstorm research ideas, talk about topics that sparked your intellectual curiosity, or discuss your performance in class. Although office hours should be used less for asking questions like, “What did I miss?” from an absence, we are very welcome to follow up with specific queries/concerns about course content and how to accommodate academic life with everyday life.

**Academic Honesty Statement:** Since the integrity of the academic enterprise of any institution of higher education requires honesty in scholarship and research, academic honesty is required of all students at UMass. Academic dishonesty is prohibited in all programs of the University. Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: cheating, fabrication, plagiarism, and facilitating dishonesty. Appropriate sanctions may be imposed on any student who has committed an act of academic dishonesty. Instructors should take reasonable steps to address academic misconduct. Any person who has reason to believe that a student has committed academic dishonesty should bring such information to the attention of the appropriate course instructor as soon as possible. Instances of academic dishonesty not related to a specific course should be brought to the attention of the appropriate department Head or Chair. Since students are expected to be familiar with this policy and the commonly accepted standards of academic integrity, ignorance of such standards is not normally sufficient evidence of lack of intent (http://www.umass.edu/dean_students/codeofconduct/acadhonesty/)

**Course Accessibility and Accommodation Statement:** UMass, Amherst is committed to providing an equal educational opportunity for all students. The course takes the UDL principles seriously and the class material will be available in multiple formats via Moodle for all students. Details about the course modality are in the pages that follow. In addition, Disability Services (DS) provides services to students with disabilities: http://www.umass.edu/disability/ and keeps documentation on
file of physical, psychological, or learning disability. If you need accommodations contact DS and us within the first two weeks of the term so that we can work together to meet your learning needs. A letter from DS is not sufficient excuse for late or missed work or absences. If, after consulting the syllabus, you anticipate missing classes or think you will need alternative formats and timelines for assignments, please contact us well before the assignment deadline to make arrangements. I

**Required Texts:** All reading materials are available as PDFs via Moodle.

**Assignments and Grade Distributions**

**Attendance (5%):** Attendance and preparedness are expected. The course is designed around both lecture and in-class discussion. Students should have completed the reading assignment a given week before the class session that Friday.

**Weekly Journals (25%):** Students are expected to write weekly (250-300 word minimum), submitted through Moodle every Friday that follows the course for that week. Journal entries that explore questions such as: What was the key theme of the week’s reading? What were the main takeaways of the text and/or in-class discussion? Did this reading provide a different perspective on the issue?

**Monthly Quizzes (25%):** Each quiz will cover only the content for its preceding month, e.g., quizzes are not cumulative. These should be completed by their deadlines via the appropriate modules on Moodle. There will be a week between a quiz becoming visible and closing. These quizzes will begin and end during the middle-to-end of each month. Quizzes are student-graded, meaning students assign a grade appropriate to an assignment’s having met the criteria in the rubric presented later in the syllabus.

**Final Exam / Final Aesthetic Project (45%):** There will be two options for a “final.” Students may take a traditional exam. Access to the final will be similar to the method of accessing monthly quizzes. Students will complete the written exam (essay-based and short answer) online in a time-monitored format. Students will have the option of saving their exam and returning to it at a later point. Alternatively, students may choose to create an aesthetic project. The expectations and rubric for this option are located at the end of the syllabus.

**Grade Distribution:** 97-99 A+ | 93-96 A | 90-92 A- | 87-89 B+ | 83-86 B | 80-82 B- | 77-79 C+ | 73-77 C | 70-72 C- | 67-69 D+ | 63-66 D | 60-62 D- | 0-59 F
“It is only by being shameless about risking the obvious that we happen into the vicinity of the transformative.” Eve Sedgwick

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Text</th>
<th>Major Themes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wed, Sept 6</td>
<td>The Syllabus</td>
<td>Course Expectations, Graded Assignments.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion Question:</strong> How is the power over life and death distributed in unequal ways according to social class?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion Question:</strong> What about identity makes the formation of a coalition for social change more difficult, or less so?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Politics of Nonnormativity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Major Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Map,</strong> from <em>We Want it All: An Anthology of Radical Trans Poetics</em></td>
<td><strong>Discussion Question:</strong> What is the danger of classifying groups, spaces, and places in terms of their differences?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed, Oct 4</td>
<td><strong>Rubin, Gayle.</strong> “The Traffic in Women: Notes on the Political Economy of Sex”; <strong>Butler, Judith,</strong> “Radically Queer,” from <em>Bodies that Matter</em> and “Your Actions Create Your Gender,” URL on Moodle.</td>
<td>Lesbian Feminism, Women’s Queer Object Status, Performativity, Woman as the Subject of Feminism, Queer Feminism, Gender and Desire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed, Oct 18</td>
<td><strong>Gould, Deborah.</strong> “Pride and Its Sisters,” from <em>Moving Politics: Emotion and ACT-UP’s Fight against AIDS</em>; <strong>Centers for Disease Control</strong>, Factsheets; <strong>UNAIDS</strong>. International Report Summaries; <strong>Film Screening:</strong> “Paris is Burning,” Directed by Jennie Livingston.</td>
<td>HIV-AIDS, Race and Violence, Gender and Race, Sexuality, Film and Representation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion Question:</strong> How does the documentary as well as Gould’s work show a disconnect between affects (or feelings) of belonging and racial classification?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion Question:</strong> What are the consequences of the argument that there is an ideal-type of gender when anchored to sexuality (consider woman-identified women against</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Major Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion Question:</strong> What are the connections, if any, between theories of disability and theories of nonnormative sexuality?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion Question:</strong> How is affect, or the sense/feeling of objects and attachments to them, being taken into account when the authors argue that no critical object of study is without a biased history?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion Question:</strong> Knowing what we know now, what strategies or tactics might exist whereby trans communities refuse a certain kind of medicalized narrative? What is the connection between these insights and that “being sick” is too often used as a problematic wedge between transness and subjectivity?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Major Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mon, Nov 20 – Fri, Nov 24: No Class</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion Question:</strong> Do you agree with Heaney that queer theory obscured the critical history of transness through queer scholarship emphasizing “trans” as a mere part of LGB history?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Discussion Question:</strong> What does it mean to “turn up” our capacities to be inconvenienced?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wed, Dec 13</td>
<td>Final Exam/Aesthetic Project Deadline</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Additional Resources**

*Embodyment, The Body, Structures of Life*


*Queer/Trans Feminisms*

https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.1525/rep.2022.158.11.106.
Glossary of Frequently Used Terms

**Affect**: The state or condition of being affected. Usually indicates sensation before emotional intelligibility.

**Alienation**: Refers to a psychic condition first advanced by Karl Marx in his *1844 Manuscripts* whereby human beings are stripped of their otherwise natural relationship with either: (1) the biological and metabolic conditions assigned to labor (*see* Embodiment); or (2) the products thereof.

**Binary Logic**: The ordering of reality (or ontology) into two essentially diametrically opposite groups. The binary itself is often loosely held together by historical consolidation and social taboo. The first term is often understood to be the “normative” term that conditions the second, or subordinate, term. The most notable binaries discussed in this class include:

**Male/Female**: Refers to the (biological) sexual differentiation of the human body usually assigned at birth and is dependent upon the intelligible presence of genitalia. Males typically have the visible signs of reproductive organs such as the penis, testes, and scrotum. Females typically have the visible signs of reproductive organs associated with the vulva: the clitoris, labia, and vaginal canal.

**Man/Woman**: Refers to the social functions assigned to the sexual differentiations accorded to a person birth-assigned sex. Social functions tend to follow a logic according primacy of the phallus: assertive/passive; penetrative/receptive; dominant/subservient; subject/object.

**Marked/Unmarked**: Refers to the conditional states associated with privileged or unprivileged status. The marked category is understood within a cultural imaginary as difference, is always seen or implied, and carries stigma. The unmarked category is understood as the very reproduction of the cultural imaginary itself. Hence man/woman follows the logic of marked/unmarked, so too does Black/white.

**Masculinity/Femininity**: Refers to the various expressions of gender’s social functionality that follow a similar logic assigned to the man/woman binary. Masculine traits are usually ascribed to male bodies and used to identify normative manly behaviors such as activity, productivity, and aggressivity. Feminine traits are usually ascribed to female bodies and are used to identify normative womanly behaviors such as passivity, reproductive, and caregiving.

**Public/Private**: Refers to the general difference accorded to everyday life associated with Aristotle’s *Politics* that accord public life a primacy of relations (political in nature) assumed by property holders. The private is the domain of individual property holders whose ownership extended, for Aristotle, over the entirety of the domain. As property holders were limited to men this relation of dominance subsumed wives, children, concubines, and slaves.

**Sameness/Difference**: Refers to the philosophical relations of identity associated with John Locke and the European Enlightenment. Sameness is the basis for the consolidation of the self-identity of a subject, a human being accorded with rational faculties and civility. Difference is the basis for constructing the other or non-identity of an object, a (sometimes) human being denied rational faculties and civility. It should be noted that sameness as well as identity are founded on the presence of its binary opposite, difference.

**Subject/Object**: Refers to the European Enlightenment’s elaboration of the status of an agent or self-sufficient being (subject) and its passive non-agentic being (object) upon which the former exercises control over the latter. Subjects tend to reflect the privileges accorded to their relation within a cultural system or symbolic economy that has consolidated subjectivity (manhood or selfhood) and objectivity (womanhood or otherness). *See* Subjectivity or Object Relations.
**Blackness:** The ante-ontological movement of a (what is before the bodies, flesh, or pigmentation) cultural whole associated Black American lifeworlds. Associated with the Radical Black Tradition and the works of Fred Moten, Cedric Robinson, and Hortense Spillers.

**Body, the:** The ontological (what is assigned real or existent) entity consisting of a whole organism with visible enclosures of flesh, internal structures that may include skeleton and muscle.

**Chattel Slavery:** Refers to the institutional designs of human servitude lasting between the 16th and 19th centuries as a global and, more particularly, an American economy. Characterized by the total abjection and objectification of the human-in-servitude (hence chattel) and the total loss of legal and social standing as a human being.

**Cis, see Trans:** Refers to a normativity that defines the so-called coherence between a subject’s gender and their birth-assigned sex. Recent criticisms have shown that cis (gender, sexual) tends to naturalize this “coherence” and normalize transness as pathologically “incoherent.”

**Color Line, the:** Refers to W. E. B. DuBois’s term first elaborated in *The Souls of Black Folks* wherein he named racial difference a matter of socially constructed and historically consolidated value placed on the color of the flesh. Usually denotes a racial difference in binary distinction between Black and white.

**Commodity Fetish:** Refers to the theory first advanced by Karl Marx most famously in the first volume of *Das Kapital* holding that capitalism and its free markets alienate human labor from the products of that labor (commodity) to such an extent that the commodity’s meaningfulness outstrips its actual worth.

**Community:** Community is a singular-plural noun referring to a group of individual members possessing a similar psychic, historical, or affective bond. May also refer to an “imaginal bond” such as the nation.

**Communities, of Color:** Refers to the multiple and sometimes overlapping groups consisting of a singular community-plural characterized by non-whiteness (see Racialization). Criticized for its lumping together of otherwise disparate communities, such as Black American communities, whose histories and contemporary social relations are radically divergent.

**Disability:** A term coined in during the late-20th century activists to describe the conditional (long-term or short-term, chronic or episodic) incapacity to interact with so-called normalized standards of society/culture. The terms is often criticized for its reduction of a person to a single or series of difference of embodiments that mark them redundantly as not able-bodied. A more capacious definition refers the ways that normative accounts of the so-called able body (bipedally mobile, heterosexually reproductive, economically productive) have become coherent thereby rendering the constructed world’s normativity invisible. Visible and non-visible disabilities are typically included with the latter having only recently been added.

**Discourse:** The term typically refers to the exchange of communication between two or more people. Its importance to critical theory changed when Michel Foucault contended that discourse consists of a domain of knowledge affirming or disaffirming conditional statements consolidated into a field or branch of science. Importantly, the term links the production of both nature and culture, holding that nature is as much a product of domains of knowability within the frameworks historically defined within culture.

**Discursive:** The adjectival form of discourse. Refers to the way that an object or subject is formed under the conditions particular to a discourse (e.g., biology historically produced racial differences that have been largely criticized as discursive and, therefore, not part of any natural order).
**Embodiment**, *see* Body: The condition or phenomenological sensation assigned to having or living within a body.

**Enfleshment**: A term associated with Hortense Spillers in “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe,” referring to the way that the body is first visualized and understood through the interface of the flesh; it is, in her argument, the first body with which slavers and colonists came in contact.

**Essentialism**: The philosophical or moral belief associated with medieval Christian humanists like St. Augustine who argued that God created a fixed core that is universal and prior to any constituent part of a larger whole. Essentialism holds that an essence of a thing is the eternal cause of actions, behaviors, and the production or destruction of lifeworlds. It is summed up by the Latin motto *essentia prior ad actio*.

**Existentialism**: The philosophy or moral belief most associated with Jean-Paul Sartre who argued that human life is an ongoing product (an accumulation of action and agency) that cannot be ascribed to an essential feature. Human life is therefore open to radical free will which is only constrained by social conditions (such as class, race, gender, ableism). Often associated with later “anti-humanist” schools of thought arguing that the term “human” is corrupted by its history with humanism. It is summed up by the Latin motto *actio prior ad essentia*.

**Feminism**: A heterogenous (or pluralized) collection of philosophical and social beliefs, programs, and (sometimes) political identities. Feminist theory holds that most Western models of democracy (indeed its very history) is based on a male-sex dominated social arrangement privileging the status of men as a social group. Criticism of this arrangement, or patriarchy, has been recently revised to include heteronormative reproduction, cisnormative (or nontrans) ableism, and racial exclusivity. Criticisms internal to the most recent iterations of feminism include the cisnormativity and racially exclusivity of feminism itself, including its Euro-American (or Western) centrism.

**Fugitivity**: A term associated with decolonial thinker Edouard Glissant that has been recently been taken up within Black Studies and Critical Race Theory. Glissant refers to fugitivity as meaningfulness particular to a historical or cultural community or set of communities which remains outside the capacity of Western thought to conceptualize. *See* Blackness and its ante-ontological status.

**Gender**: One part of an often tripartite description of the reproductive body (sex/gender/gender identity) that refers to the social function associated with a person’s birth-assigned sex. *See* Sex, Gender Identity.

**Gender Identity**: On part of an often tripartite description of the reproductive body (sex/gender/gender identity) that refers to the internal relation between (or identity of) a person’s gender and their birth-assigned sex. *See* Gender, Sex.

**Historical Materialism**: A philosophical model associated with the collected works of Karl Marx and Fredrich Engels in their co-authored *Communist Manifesto*. This model elaborates the development and subsequent identity of a given social, political, and economic totality through a rigorous focus on the productive means and modes particular to moments within an historically conditioned time. Materialism is the underlying theoretical component positing the indispensable need to understand the actually existing modes of everyday life through focus on technologies, media, and human sensoria.

**Intersectionality**: A mode of analysis coined in the early 1990s by Kimberlé Crenshaw. Crenshaw developed the approach to illustrate and address how socio-economic inequalities affect Black women at disproportionately higher rates and under the specific circumstances these rates emerge. Crenshaw has described the origination of intersectionality as a prism through which feminism and other kinds of social justice advocacy can identify the situated antagonisms that race and gender coincide and condition life chances. It is part of the anti-racism labor that feminist approaches to social justice must incorporate.
Intersex: Refers to the often medicalized histories and narratives that mark “ambiguities” in newborn infants’ genitalia as pathological in condition and, often, argued to require medical intervention. These medicalized standards have been heavily criticized through decades of activism. Intersex is often discussed as a birth-attributable condition; but, as many have with the Intersex Society of North America have pointed out, intersex traits may not emerge until well after infancy.

Nonbinary, or Genderqueer: A social kind formed out of a relation of non-identity between a person’s birth-assigned sex and socially elaborated genders. Nonbinary communities may identify between the binary poles of man/woman or entirely outside, invoking a different set of cultural and historical markers that are claimed over and beyond Western notions of gender.

Normativity: Refers to the interlocking set of social and historical imaginaries setting the framework for what constitutes regular, ordinary, or “normal” kinds or genres of being, behavior, and action.

Object Relations, see Subjectivity: Refers to the imaginary (but not fictional) relationships formed out of the integration of normative subjects and subjectivities within a larger cultural totality.

Ontological, or Ontology: Refers to a theory or conventional belief underwriting what constitutes reality and real objects. Often referred to by the philosophical branch of Metaphysics.

Phenomenology: Refers to the philosophical study of experience as a process through which the experience and phenomena are registered as experience. This philosophy breaks with existentialism’s emphasis on the primacy of human consciousness. Phenomenology emphasizes a de-centered or non-centrality of consciousness as such and opens the field of thought to the importance of affect and the unconscious. The motto most often associated with phenomenology is “to the things themselves.”

Power, or Relations: Typically refers to the capacity of one subject to exercise their will over another. Usually one agent can possess power and another cannot. This concept is attributed to the sociological vernacular of Max Weber. More recent scholarship has tended to adopt Michel Foucault’s concept of power as being dispersed, non-possessable, and a product of a series of interlocking relations that produce different forms of coercion in the guise of non-oppressive “knowledge.” Thus, power and knowledge become mutual expressions of one another when knowledge about the body enables prison wardens more exacting disciplinary measures to restrict movement and bodily mobility for punishment.

Productive Labor: Attributed to the work and industry of a person or class of persons whose metabolic energies (or labor) produce economically viable (or profitably) goods/commodities.

Property Relations: Refers to the kinds of relationships that emerge as a result of legal and social restrictions on who and how property (defined loosely as both land and material object) is distributed within civil society.

Race/Racialization, see Color Line: Refers to the socially assignation of value placed upon the human condition based on physiological differences. These racial divisions, or analytic as Denise Ferreira da Silva names it, took place over the course of centuries (racialization) and consolidated what is contemporarily the “vision” as color difference as racial difference. No scientific evidence exists that hasn’t been summarily discarded proving the existence of biologically significant differences for “race” as a human distinction. Its continued influence over contemporary politics and social sciences (and some natural sciences) reproduces the power-as-knowledge relation. See Power.
Reproductive Labor: Attributed to the work and industry of those social subjects usually restricted to the private domain and excluded from the productive labor of market economies. These include, historically, women (wives) and domestic workers (hired outside the protections of the state), or slaves and indentured servants (the former lacking the conditional status of “human” granted to the latter). Each participated under relations that favored men (husbands) as workers. Wives, domestic workers, daughters, or other-mothers were responsible for the reproduction of and well-being of children and therefore the growth of the economy’s labor force; the reproduction of everyday tasks that allowed men to enter the labor force; or the upkeep of the household so as to reduce the stress that enabled the daily operations of otherwise laboring men.

Sex, or Sexual Difference: Refers to the primary reproductive characteristics assigned to a newborn infant on the basis of male or female genitalia. Sex has become the site of ongoing criticism as the standards for what constitutes adult sex in a meaningful or universal way has been adopted. For example, some U.S. states regard sex as genital-based while others refer to the chromosomal differences at the genetic level. Each elaboration of sex merely reaffirms the social functionality of a gender to which the latter is eventually assigned.

Sexuality: Refers to the erotic desires of a social subject that has too often been reduced to a heteronormative trope of sex-opposite attraction often presupposing a monogamous intention. Reproductive heterosexuality is generally used to ascribe what is socially understood as the “drive” or “instinct” to procreate. This has had direct effects on non-heterosexual sexualities that include dismissing same-gender eroticism (homophobia) to the legitimation of only the two-person monogamous couple (homonormative).

Social Construction: Refers to the theory that reality and its objects are constituted as “real” by and through the interdependencies of shared knowledge among peoples across history, culture, and material production. Social constructionists hold that everything is constructed to the extent that knowledge about a thing (as in everything) requires moving through the processes of historical and cultural meaning.

Social Reproduction, see Reproductive Labor: Refers to the labor required to keep the infrastructure of a civil society and its constituent parts (social subjects) alive and productive.

Subjectivity, see Subject/Object under Binary Logic: Refers to the capacity of a person to possess an interior psychic life in and through which feeling is expressed, explored, and enjoyed.

Trans, see Cis: Refers to the umbrella term that describes a variety of subjectivities. Some experience their normatively ascribed gender and birth-assigned sex at odds. Others describe their them in completely different vernaculars. Recent criticism among trans theorists hold that there is rarely “match” between any gender and sex and therefore push back against the “normalizing” form of dysphoria.

Whiteness: Refers to a cultural ontology that ascribes privilege to light-skin and otherwise visually “Euro-American” white social subjects. Whiteness does not depend on white populations or individual white people. It refers to the discursive and material system of rewards and punishments that includes an anti-Black racism (and classism) immanent to it which diminishes the life chances of Black and non-white people while enhancing those of ascribed as white.
Examples of Full-Credit Journal Entry and Quiz Answer

The following examples were taken from recent semesters and demonstrate top marks for each assignment. First, are journal entries and demonstrate (1) a review of the material; (2) a regularity of reference to the material; (3) critical themes of import for the student. The second is a quiz answer that did an exceptionally good job of elaborating a theme for which the question asked. The journal entry was edited with permission by the student (indicated by the bracketed ellipses. Since you will be self-grading quizzes, these three conditions must always be met in addition to being about 500 words.

**Journal Entries [Simone de Beauvoir and becoming “woman”]**: This idea that one isn’t born a woman yet becomes one rings true to me and my own understanding of gender in itself personally. I believe that gender isn’t a real thing but rather a social construct that is taught and we learn through being socialized. Femininity is not inherent but rather constructed. De Beauvoir states in the second sex that women have been treated as inferior and as “secondary ” due to the fact of society programming women to fulfill the needs of men and exist only in relation to men thus not being whole or developed but rather existing to please or serve, constantly seek validation from men inherently teaching women that their worth is connected to the way men perceive them enforcing the beliefs that being “pretty” or “desirable” is the utmost achievement of a woman, and, the historic imbalance of rights and political power or public influence. [...] De Beauvoir argues that a woman is taught from childhood to merely be an accessory rather than a full fledge person.

**Quiz Answer [Hortense Spillers, the “flesh,” and motherhood denied]**: The meaning of assigning a "female" form to the social position of "gender" is another nod to Black women being marked and thereby gatekept from a lot of traditional "womanly" things reserved only for white women. The theft of the body becomes a displacement from social identities and the undoing of the Black female gender as a symbolically dense power. It is not the same as her white counterpart because it is complicated and subverted by her race. The body is stolen or disposed of. Spillers argues that the Black female gender, that of female subjectivity, because it is written out of cultural power, gives the woman-subject a unique position to name herself, to be insurgent.
End of Semester Assignment Option 1: Final Exam

General Instructions You must provide answers as indicated for each part. Please read the instructions carefully. You may choose to answer any 3 of the 5 “short answer” questions in PART ONE, but you must additionally answer 2 of the 4 “essay answers” from PART TWO.

1. Short Answers (30 pts): Answer ONLY three in any order. You should answer any three as distinct questions. A 200-250 word paragraph for each answer should suffice. Please double space your answers in 12 pt. font. Reference the reading material if given the chance/prompt.

2. Essay Answers (70 pts): Answer two, and no more than two, from the following. Please provide your answers in essay format, i.e., 500 -750 words, double-spaced, and in 12 pt. font. These answers are not unlike your quiz responses. Again, each question should be treated separately. You should have two distinct answers that address their respective questions. For these answers, reference the reading material when and where you can. Each question is stand alone. They should not relate to one another.
Final Project: Aesthetic Creation

Overall Scope/Aim of the Project: Your “Aesthetic Project” will be an artistically rendered creation based upon a topic/issue of your choosing from the syllabus. You may choose the medium, process, action, and final form (interdisciplinary, socially-engaged, web-based, music, installation, etc.). But your project must be public-facing. By that I mean it is based in time and space. Aesthetic objects are dynamic in nature. You will find that it is best to document both your process and your final outcome. Keep a journal/diary—even if its entries cover only the range of a few days.

Helpful Tips/Questions for Consideration: The following are points of reference to enable you to hone your project’s aim. Consider them while you are completing/thinking about how to conclude your project.

1. Consider your THEME. What topic/challenge/issue/problem do you want to explore and why? How does your topic connect to a specific idea in critical theory? What is your message?
2. Think about relations of TIME/HISTORY. Are you looking at the past, the present and/or the future? How can you make it dynamic in time? Also consider SCALE. Is your medium/message intended for a local or a larger, more global audience?
3. Think about issues of SPACE/ARTISTIC HOME. Where do you want your work to live, e.g., a museum, an archive, a library, a gallery? Does the space/location change over time? During the project did this element change in relation to the scope of your aim?
4. What is the intended AUDIENCE. Who do you want to engage in this work? (Local communities? Decision- and policy-makers? Art and/or aesthetes?) What do you think their various points of view on this issue/topic would be? Could you foresee any resistance from communities on this project, or at least the topic it is broaching?

Project Expectations: The following components must be assembled for each project regardless of the medium:

1. Your project must connect to at least one idea from any of the critical themes we examined throughout the semester. You must clearly state which theory or theorist you are arguing is pertinent to your work. This means making a direct reference to the thinker and his/her/their theoretical insights.

2. You should answer the following questions within your summary as they are reflected in your aesthetic work: Why and how is this theory pertinent to your work? To what extent does this theory inform or attend to your medium? If you were to present this project to a larger public/audience, how would you go about defining why this work matters to the everyday lives of the communities represented in your subject matter?

3. Your aesthetic representation/object can be any medium. But each project must be accompanied by a short summary. If your project is entirely textual you can provide a shortened executive summary of your work. Typically, the summary should be a typed essay, between 3-5 double-spaced pages (2-3 if accompanying textual work) and in 12 pt. font. You may choose a citation style if reference material is needed. Choose one with which you are most comfortable and with which you will remain consistent throughout the paper.

Grading Rubric:

1. Idea/Concept (20%): Have you come up with a nuanced, layered idea to address this issue and make a change? Have you defined your theory/thematic? Have you articulated your idea/concept in a concise, clear way through your writing?
2. Process (30%): Have you detailed the process of how to get to the final form of your idea/concept? Have you addressed all the questions posed Section II above (Project Expectations):

3. Course Theme (30%): Have you explained and developed in both your work and, more specifically, in your written summary.

4. Execution (20%): Have you executed your idea/concept to the best of your ability at this moment in time? Have you made choices about your final form that work well with your idea?