WGSS 110: Sexuality, Race, and Nation: Introduction to LGBT and Queer Studies

Spring 2014
T/R 9:40-11:10
Old Main 10

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Office Hours: T/R 3:00 – 4:30, or by appointment

Course Description:
This course is an introduction to LGBT and queer studies. Using empirical studies, film, narratives, critical texts and various methodologies, we will trace the emergence of LGBT studies and its linkages with, and divergence from, queer theory. This critical interrogation of sexuality is one heavily influenced by feminism and social constructionist perspectives. Central to this course will be an exploration of (hetero)normativity as it relates to sex and sexuality, how power is implicated in queer politics and sexualities, and the ways in which race, gender, nationality, and dis/ability impact and influence sexual identities and sexual subjectivities.

Critical thinking and inquiry are part of this course, which means students will be asked to consider and understand multiple, and possibly conflicting, viewpoints on a number of topics discussed in class.

MACALESTER COLLEGE STATEMENT OF PURPOSE AND BELIEF

At Macalester College we believe that education is a fundamentally transforming experience. As a community of learners, the possibilities for this personal, social, and intellectual transformation extend to us all. We affirm the importance of the intellectual growth of the students, staff, and faculty through individual and collaborative endeavor. We believe that this can best be achieved through an environment that values the diverse cultures of our world and recognizes our responsibility to provide a supportive and respectful environment for students, staff, and faculty of all cultures and backgrounds.

We expect students to develop a broad understanding of the liberal arts while they are at Macalester. Students should follow a primary course of study in order to acquire an understanding of disciplinary theory and methodology; they should be able to apply their understanding of theories to address problems in the larger community. Students should develop the ability to use information and communication resources effectively; be adept at critical, analytical, and logical thinking, and express themselves well in both oral and written forms. Finally students should be prepared to take responsibility for their personal, social, and intellectual choices.
We believe that the benefit of the educational experience at Macalester is the development of individuals who make judgments and interpretations of the broader world around them and choose actions or beliefs for which they are willing to be held accountable. We expect them to develop the ability to seek and use knowledge and experience in contexts that challenge and inform their suppositions about the world. We are committed to helping students grow intellectually and personally within an environment that models and promotes academic excellence and ethical behavior. The education a student begins at Macalester provides the basis for continuous transformation through learning and service.

**Required Texts:**

*Normal Life*, Dean Spade (NL)
*A Critical Introduction to Queer Theory*, Nikki Sullivan (CI)
*Queer Twin Cities*, edited by Twin Cities GLBT Oral History Project (QTC)

**Other Assigned Readings:**

You will find other articles in the schedule of assigned readings. These will either be handed out in class OR be available on MOODLE. MOODLE is the name of Macalester’s on-line “course management software package.” It can be located on the WWW at: HYPERLINK "http://moodle.macalester.edu" \t "_blank" http://moodle.macalester.edu. When you use MOODLE for the first time, you will be asked for your user name and password (the same as your Macalester email). These articles on MOODLE are marked ER.

**Late Paper/Exam Policy:**

Late papers and exams will NOT be accepted, unless you have an excused absence (i.e., if you are ill, there is a family emergency etc., AND you have documentation of this event). Papers are due at the beginning of class. Because I do not accept any late assignments I suggest you make final corrections/amendments/drafts the day before the assignment is due. I do not recommend doing things at the last minute. Finally, I do not accept papers via email (please refer to my email policy below).

**Preparation:**

Come to class having read and re-read the assigned readings for that day. While reading the material be sure to take notes over the assigned materials, jot down questions you would like to ask and share, and extend and connect the current assigned readings to previous discussions/articles addressed in class.

Some reading/studying techniques:

- Read the main ideas.
- Summarize in your own words.
Reread, visualize, relate, think aloud.
Take notes.
Review.
Underline, highlight, write all over the text!

**Cell phones/Gadgets:**
Turn off your cell phone and all other devices/gadgets before coming to class. If a student repeatedly fails to turn off their cell phone during the semester they will be asked to leave class. I do NOT accept laptops in my classroom.

**Email Policy:**
I do not accept any assignments emailed to me unless otherwise specified. All documents (papers, essays, exams) should be in word document, stapled, and handed to me in class. Please do not email me questions regarding an assignment if you have failed to come to class. Additionally, do not email me questions/concerns the night before an assignment is due. Email communication should be a secondary vehicle for communication. Please talk to me either before or after class or during my office hours.

**GRADE DISTRIBUTION FOR COURSE REQUIREMENTS:**
- Participation 10%
- Midterm Exam 25%
- Final Exam 25%
- Action Project 20%
- Research Paper 20%

**Course Requirements:**

**Attendance**
Attendance is mandatory. I will keep a record of your attendance. Daily attendance will positively affect the outcome of your grade. Class discussion is an extremely important aspect of this course.

Other expectations: Please be on time! Chronic tardiness (3 per semester) may result in a failing grade. Please do NOT interrupt class if you are more than 15 minutes late.

**Participation**
Participation is essential for this class. The participation component of your grade will be evaluated in the following ways: in-class essays/quizzes given throughout the semester, participation in class discussions/in-class assignments, and your action project.

**In-class essays/quizzes:** Throughout the semester I will have periodic and unannounced in-class essays or quizzes over the assigned readings for that day. These essays/quizzes
will be graded A-F. If you have carefully prepared and read the material you should do well on these essays/quizzes. Please refer above to the reading/study techniques.

**Action Project/Research Paper:**
This action project is an activist-oriented project that uses LGBT scholarship/theories discussed in class to engage/understand a particular issue impacting our local community. **This project is meant to link theory and practice/activism.** I will soon be dividing the class into small groups of 3-4 individuals. Each group will develop their own action project – that is, groups will choose a particular issue they would like to engage (which must be approved by me), and devise a plan on how best to tackle/change/address it. The aim of this project is toward some kind of change—for the better (social awareness campaigns, working with/assisting local LGBT organizations on some particular issue, engaging/addressing some issue on Macalester campus). Group members are responsible for/to each other, meaning individual members must be **doing their fair share of the labor.** The end result will be some kind of product/some tangible solution to the issue your group has chosen to tackle. I will throughout the semester set aside some class time for group work. Your work on this action project will culminate with a class presentation.

**Research Paper:** Each action group will be producing **(collectively)**, over the course of this semester, a research paper. This paper is in many ways the theory part of this action project. That is, the theories/concepts/arguments discussed in class will be your guide to understanding your action project—the issue you are seeking to address. The research paper must incorporate outside material (i.e., materials outside this class) to address/understand the issue at hand. I foresee this paper being between 12 - 15 pages in length.

**Exams**
There will be two exams during the semester: an in-class mid-term exam and a final exam. The final exam is not comprehensive, and will only include material covered after the mid-term. These exams will be in essay format. The mid-term and final exam are each worth 25% of your grade. **Under NO circumstances will I accept late exams** unless you have an excused absence.

**Accessibility Accommodations:**
I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. Contact the Associate Dean of Students, Lisa Landreman at 696-6220 to make an appointment. It is important to meet early in the semester to ensure your accommodations are approved.
that you begin the semester successfully.

**GRADING**

A  
95-100

A-  
90-94

B+  
86-89

B  
84-85

B-  
80-83

C+  
76-79

C  
74-75

C-  
70-73

D+  
66-69

D  
64-65

D-  
60-63

F  
< 60

**TENTATIVE COURSE SCHEDULE:** It is highly likely that this schedule will change over the course of the semester. Although I aim to keep to the syllabus as much as possible, I also realize that one cannot predict things in advance. The class flow/dynamics as well as possibilities for guest speakers, additional readings not on the syllabus, and additional time for class discussion on the readings will impact the pace at which we proceed. Any changes/updates will be announced in class. It is thus up to you to know where we stand in relation to the syllabus.

**January:**

1/28  **Introduction**

1/30  **The (Discursive) Production and Regulation of Hetero/Homo/Sexuality**

  **Readings:**     “Inside/Out” by Diana Fuss (ER)

**February:**
2/4 Readings: ER: Foucault, Ch. 2: The Perverse Implantation
Sullivan, Ch. 1 (“The Social Construction”)

2/6 The Medical Model: Sexual Normativity and Racial Regulation

Readings: ER: “Scientific Racism and the Emergence of the Homosexual Body”
Sullivan, Ch. 4 (“Queer Race”)

2/11 The Medical Model cont’d

ER: “Lesbians Under the Medical Gaze,” by Terry

2/13 Contemporary Perversions and Medical Categories: Gender (Identity) Disorder

Readings: ER: “Mutilating Gender,” by Spade
ER: “Undiagnosing Gender,” by Butler

* Action Group Outline Due!

2/18 Challenging Compulsory Heterosexuality: Emerging Sexuality/Queer Studies

Readings: ER: “Thinking Sex,” by Rubin

2/20 Thinking the (White/Western) Closet: Disciplining, Imperialist Device?

Readings: ER: “In the Closet,” by Seidman

2/25 Thinking the (White/Western) Closet cont’d

Readings: ER: “Beyond the Closet as Raceless Paradigm,” by Jackson
* Action Group Workshop & Progress Report

2/27 The Queer Project

Readings: Sullivan, Ch. 3 ("Queer")
ER: "What's Wrong with Normal?,” by Warner

March:

3/4 Queer (AIDS) Activism

Readings: ER: "Shocking Pink Praxis,” by Saalfield and Navarro
QTC, Chapter 10 ("Private Cures for a Public Epidemic")

3/6 Critiquing the (White) Queer Project

Readings: ER: “You Can Have my Brown Body and Eat It, Too!,” by Perez

3/11 Critiquing the (White) Queer Project cont’d

Readings: ER: “Punks, Bulldaggers and Welfare Queens,” by Cohen
QTC, Chapter 4 ("Myth of the Great White North")

* Discussion/Critique of “It Gets Better” Campaign

3/13 Mid-Term

3/18 Spring Break

3/20 Spring Break

3/25 (Hetero)normativity and the Nation

Readings: ER: “Sex in Public” by Berlant and Warner (ER)
QTC, Chapter 7 ("Skirting Boundaries” by Tyson)

3/27 (Re)Thinking Sex/(Re)Thinking (Trans)Gender

Readings: Sullivan, Ch. 6 (“Transsexual Empires”)
“Transgender Studies,” by Stryker (ER)
April:

4/1 Lesbianism, Bisexuality and the Politics of Identity

Readings: “Sexual Identity and Bisexual Identities,” by Rust (ER)
“(Be)coming Out: Lesbian Identity and Politics,” by Phelan (ER)

* Action Project Workshop/Progress Report

4/3 Queer Sex as Resistance?

Readings: Sullivan, Ch. 9 ("Sadomasochism as Resistance")
ER: “Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity,” by Foucault

4/8 Queer Sex as Resistance cont’d

Readings: ER: “For ‘the Children’ Dancing the Beloved Community,” by Allen
ER: “Corporeality, Sadomasochism and Sexual Trauma,” by Hammers

4/10 Critical Trans/Politics and the State

Readings: Spade, Introduction AND Chpts. 1-3

4/15 Gender Regulation, the State and Criminal Punishment Systems

Readings: Spade, Ch. 4
“It’s War in Here,” by Bassichis (ER)

4/17 Film, Southern Comfort

4/22 Gay Marriage, the (Queer) Debate: Homonormativity or Political Progress?

Readings: QTC, Chapter 11 (“Gay was Good” by Murphy)
Gay Marriage is Good for America, articles by Rauch and Sullivan

4/24 Action Project Presentations

4/29 Action Project Presentations
May:

5/1  Review for Final Exam, Research Papers Due!

5/6  Final Exam