

## **CMST 7966: Feminist & Queer Criticism**

Dr. Ashley N. Mack

**Office:** COATES 132

**E-mail:** [ashleymack@lsu.edu](mailto:ashleymack@lsu.edu)

**Phone:** (504) 322-8999 (my cell)

**Meeting day and time:** TH 3-6pm

**Office hours:** TH 12-2pm

**Sec.:** 1

**Term:** Spring 2016

**Meeting room:** COATES 153

### **COURSE OBJECTIVES**



The purpose of this course is two-fold. First, we will survey the modern variants of feminist and queer political theories. We will critically interrogate the commitments of the different “strands” of feminist theory and understand how the critically queer perspective emerged from a crisis in feminisms. Second, we undertake the task of the theoretical survey in order to enable you to read rhetorical texts from a feminist or critically queer orientation. We will emphasize how one might use feminist and/or queer political theories as the basis for productive and rigorous rhetorical criticism, discuss how to recognize implicit rhetorical theories in feminist and queer discourses, and finally to determine which feminist and/or queer approaches are appropriate to various kinds of texts.

The course assumes a basic sympathy but welcomes critical engagement with the feminist goals of gender equity, self-determination of women, and sex/gender freedom. We will also critically engage how these aims are complicated and challenged in the contexts of racism, nationalism, and class-based exploitation.

### **CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

The success of this course depends on the interactions generated between all of us. I do expect you to participate actively in class, share your ideas and perspectives, comment on and assess those of your fellow classmates. However, I do demand that everyone treat each other with respect. Ridicule or disrespect of any sort will not be tolerated.

### **COURSE WEBSITE**

This course makes use of the Moodle website. You should be able to access Moodle through your PAWS account. After you log into PAWS, you will find the link to Moodle under the “Student Services” category. I will post readings, course assignments, documents, as well as any announcements. Make sure to check the website regularly.

### **COURSE MATERIALS**

This course is made up of primary books and additional journal length readings I will provide links to on Moodle. The following books are required:

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999). ISBN-13: 9780674177642

Karma R. Chavez, ed., *Standing at the Intersection: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies* (New York: SUNY Press, 2012). ISBN-13: 9781438444901

Bonnie Dow, *Watching Women's Liberation, 1970: Feminisms Pivotal Year on the Network News* (Champaign, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2014). ISBN-13: 9780252080166

Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). ISBN-13: 9780822333692

Hestor Eisenstein, *Feminism Seduced: How Global Elites Use Women's Labor and Ideas to Exploit the World*, (New York: Paradigm, 2010). ISBN-13: 9781594516603

Friedrich Engels, *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State* (New York: Penguin Classics, 2010). ISBN-13: 9780141191119

Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism* (New York: Routledge, 2005). ISBN-13: 9780415951500

José Esteban Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). ISBN-13: 9780816630158

Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press. 1988). ISBN-13: 9780804714778

Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). ISBN-13: 9780822341147

Sarah Projanksy, *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Post-Feminist Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2001). ISBN-13: 9780814766903

Erin J. Rand, *Reclaiming Queer: Activist & Academic Rhetorics of Resistance* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2014). ISBN-13: 9780817318284

Sharon Smith, *Women and Socialism: Class, Race, & Capital*, Revised and Updated Edition (Boston, MA: Haymarket Books, 2015). ISBN-13: 9781608461806

Isaac West, *Transforming Citizenships: Transgender Articulations of the Law* (New York: NYU Press, 2013). ISBN-13: 9781479818921

## ASSIGNMENTS

**“Show & Tell” Presentations** (2 at 10 points each): Two times during the semester, you will present a short (4-7 pages) paper analyzing and critiquing a rhetorical artifact based on the type of criticism or theories covered that day in class. Accompanying each paper should be a series of discussion questions (the questions should be sent to the class 24 hours in advance to the class). The questions should be designed to propel the class in engaged and focused discussion of the readings using your “show and tell” as a starting point. However, the discussion questions should be focused on theoretical investigation or the application of the theories to the artifact. Content questions are less productive unless related to the use of method to examine the artifact.

**Feminist and/or Queer Rhetorical Criticism Essay** (60 points): In this course, you will write a final seminar paper (7,000-10,000 words) analyzing an approved rhetorical artifact. You must identify a discrete text or set of texts to analyze, and outline a clear framework for doing so. You must utilize a feminist and/or queer orientation developed from the perspectives outlined in this course (or another that is approved by me separately). Strong criticism is convincing, provocative, driven by curiosity, and suggestive of broader insights into the nature of rhetoric. A successful essay will be suitable for conference submission with zero or minimal revision and, ultimately, journal submission.

This essay will undergo two drafts, one for class critique (see below), and one revision. In preparation for this assignment, you will complete several corollary assignments including a topic

selection (due 2/18) and paper proposal (due 4/7). In addition to your written essay, you are also responsible for delivering a presentation of your paper to the class during the last week of school. Your final grade for the paper will be based on the revision. Points will be deducted if earlier draft and proposal work is not turned in. Late work is never accepted.

Your final grade will thus be determined on several things: (1) how you revise your paper in light of the reviews; and (2) how you formally address the concerns of the editor and reviewer in a resubmission cover letter. **The final paper and these items are due on finals day, Thursday, 5/5 in class.**

**Peer Review** (10 points): The writing component of the class will be modeled on the "blind review" submission process at a typical rhetorical studies journal. Our journal will be titled the *Quarterly Journal of Tigers* and each class member sits on the editorial board. When you submit your first, complete FULL essay (outlines, or incomplete work will not be considered acceptable) on **April 21st**, you shall submit a copy devoid of any self-reference whatsoever through Moodle. As editor, I will then match your "blind," versions up with TWO peer reviewers. You will thus be required to read and respond to TWO of your classmate's papers and write a response to each (1 single spaced page each, nothing exhaustive unless you are simply feeling generous). On **April 28th** you will submit these reviews to me through Moodle (again, without any self reference on main document). I will then write a cover letter as the editor summarizing the reviews and adding my own thoughts about each manuscript and return them to you as soon as possible.

**If you do not submit an essay for peer review you are ineligible to complete peer review assignment.**

Your final grade will thus be determined on several things: (1) how you revise your paper in light of the reviews; and (2) how you formally address the concerns of the editor and reviewer in a resubmission cover letter. **The final paper and these items are due on finals day, Thursday, 5/5 in class.**

**Engagement Points** (10 points): Participation in class discussion, attendance, promptness, providing "minutes" at least once in the semester, and participation in activities.

### Grade Scale

Letter Grade	Percentage Needed
A+	97.5 – 100%
A	92.5 – 97.89%
A-	89.5 – 92.85%
B+	87.5 – 89.49%
B	82.5 – 87.49%
B-	79.5 – 82.49%
C+	77.5 – 79.49%
C	72.5 – 77.49%
C-	69.5 – 72.49%

D+	67.5 – 69.49%
D	62.5 – 67.49%
D-	59.5 – 62.49%
F	0 – 59.49%

### Assignment Weights

ASSIGNMENT	Points
“Show & Tell” presentations	10 points each x 2 = 20 points total
Rhetorical Criticism Essay	60 points
Peer Review	10 points
Engagement	10 points
TOTAL	100

### COURSE POLICIES

**Reading:** I expect you to arrive to class each week having completed all required readings and prepared to engage in thoughtful, mature discussion.

If you are aware of readings, television clips, etc. that reflect the day’s discussion, you should feel free to share them with the class (provided they are appropriate) via email or during the designated class session.

**Course Content:** This class sometimes requires us to talk about adult content or issues that relate to intimate parts of human life such as sexuality. If you ever feel uncomfortable let me know or feel free to excuse yourself. But I want to encourage us to all learn to engage intellectually and objectively content. Feeling uncomfortable usually means you are learning and challenging yourself.

**The Communication Environment:** The success of this course depends on the interactions generated between all of us. The study of rhetoric engages a wide range of philosophical, political, and ethical questions that cut to the very core of what it means to be a citizen, even a human. I am committed to ensuring that our classroom is a hospitable environment where we can respectfully discuss and debate a wide range of relevant issues. Everyone should feel comfortable to speak their minds, but must do so in a way that enables others to do the same. Ridicule or disrespect of any sort will not be tolerated. You should also prepare to be held accountable for anything you say in class.

**Quality of Written Work:** Take pride in the quality of your work in this class. Written work must be spell-checked, grammar-checked, and proofread: The quality of your writing will affect your grade. All written work must be typed in 12-point Times New Roman font, double-spaced, 1-inch margins, with a clear heading up at the top. Your name must be included. You must include in-text citations and use an appropriate citation style (MLA, APA, Chicago).

**Missed Assignments and Late Work:** All assignments must be completed on time. I will not accept assignments if they are turned in late. Please plan your schedule accordingly and allow

extra time for unforeseen events. Emergency situations will be handled on an individual basis. **You must notify me in advance or as soon as humanly possible** in order for me to consider accepting an assignment late.

**Attendance:** Attendance is required.

**Technology and Electronics in the Classroom:** You can use laptops during my “meditation” but not during class discussion in the second half of class. Exceptions are if you are taking minutes or have received permission from me separately.

**Grade Appeals:** If you wish to appeal a grade on an assignment, you need to follow these procedures. I will not discuss individual grades during class time. Nor will I entertain grade complaints during class time.

- You need to wait at least 24 hours before setting up an appointment and submitting your written grade appeal to insure that you have time to carefully read and consider the feedback.
- After you have read my feedback, submit a typed, written appeal that identifies the specific issue in question (e.g., writing mechanics, content, etc.), and explains reasons why you feel the grade should be changed. Please refer to any class materials that support your rationale for a change.
- The written appeal should be submitted at least 24 hours prior to the appointment.
- When you arrive for the scheduled appointment, bring in your graded copy of the item in question (e.g., feedback form, paper, etc.) and any additional evidence to support your claims and be ready to present them.
- After meeting with you, I may wish to contemplate the matter. In any case, I will decide within two school days whether to change or uphold the grade.
- I will provide you with a written justification of my decision. We need to meet within one week (7 days) of the grade’s issue.
- Grade appeals will not be considered after that “statute of limitations” has expired.

You may feel compelled to compare grades with others in the class. If both of you are fine doing this, then there is nothing I can do to stop you. However, keep in mind that you are appealing your grade, not how you were graded compared to others. I strive to make sure grades are individual, rather than comparative, evaluations.

**University Cancellations:** In the event that classes are canceled by the university due to snow, severe weather, or other factors, students should assume that the assignments due on the day of the canceled class are due on the next class meeting. You are expected to attend your classes as scheduled if the University is not officially closed.

**Accommodations:** The University provides support and reasonable accommodations for person with disabilities. If you have a disability that may have some impact on your work in this class and for which you may require accommodations, please see a coordinator in the LSU Disability Services so that such accommodations can be arranged. After you receive the accommodation letters, please meet with me by the second week of class to discuss the provisions of those accommodations.

**Religious Observances:** It is University policy to respect the faith and religious obligations of students, faculty, and staff. Students with exams or classes that conflict with their religious

observances should notify me well in advance so that we can work out a mutually agreeable alternative.

**Waiting Policy:** Class members should wait 15 minutes for me in the event I am late (which I do not at all foresee). After that period of time, you should consider class cancelled.

**Academic Integrity:** For all of the assignments you will complete for this course, there is an expectation that everything you submit, either individually or as a group, will be of your own original work. Use of material from outside sources MUST ALWAYS include proper attribution (Chicago Style, MLA, or APA). Academic dishonesty includes but is not limited to: acts of fraud or deception on exams, projects, papers, or class assignments; attempts to gain credit for work done by another; using notes on exams or helping another student cheat; falsification or invention of information or citations; using work from previous semesters; intentionally or knowingly representing the words or ideas of another as one's own. If plagiarism or the use of non-original work is suspected (i.e., work by other students, on-line services, etc.) the matter will be investigated according to university policy. In short, do your own work!

Any student found to have turned in material not their own (either downloaded from the internet or written by another student) will immediately be reported to the Dean of Students. You can find the official LSU policies on plagiarism here: <http://www.lib.lsu.edu/instruction/plagiarism2.html> .

**Contractual Agreement:** Your acceptance of these conditions, as well as the policies outlined in this document, is implied by your continuance in the class. To maintain the integrity of everyone's grade, and ultimately, degree, all course policies are non-negotiable.

Everything in this document, including the daily schedule, is subject to revision or modification due to unforeseen circumstances.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

**Please Note:** This course requires a substantial amount of reading. You are responsible for all readings. Please complete the reading assignment *before* the listed class.

The syllabus is provisional and is subject to revision as necessary. Additional readings may be assigned from time to time, and/or assigned readings may be omitted.

*(M) refers to readings that are on Moodle, all other readings are books.*

Date	Unit Topic & Questions	Readings Due	Assignments Due
1/14	<p><b>Enlightenment Liberalism and The Foundations of Feminism</b>            How does enlightenment liberalism (a political philosophy born out of the enlightenment) influence feminist theory? How did feminist theory emerge out of the philosophical ideals of the modern democracy?</p>	<p>(M) Bryson, "Feminist Political Theory: An Introduction."            Pateman, <i>The Sexual Contract</i></p>	<p>** Sign up for Show n' Tells &amp; Minutes**</p>
1/21	<p><b>Marxist and Materialist Feminisms</b>            Marxist and materialist feminist see women's oppression as rooted in the creation and maintenance of capitalism and the existence of private property.</p>	<p>Engels, <i>The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State</i>            Smith, <i>Women and Socialism: Class, Race, &amp; Capital</i></p>	
1/28	<p><b>Standpoint Theory &amp; Feminist Epistemologies</b>            A primary aim of feminist theory is to integrate the many ways that knowledge is socially created/negotiated and that including knowledges that serve the disadvantaged will create a more just world. The readings for this week ask: how can we create and circulate more just forms of knowledge that include the historically excluded?</p>	<p>(M) Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," <i>Feminist Theory Reader: Local and Global Perspectives</i>, Carole R. McCann and Seung-Kyung Kim, eds. (New York: Routledge, 2003): 391-403.            (M) Excerpt from: Sandra Harding, ed., <i>The Feminist Standpoint Theory Reader</i> (New York: Routledge, 2004).            (M) Excerpt from: Hilde Lindemann Nelson, <i>Damaged Identities, Narrative Repair</i> (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001).</p>	
2/4	<p><b>Radical Feminisms, The Sex Wars, and The Root</b>            Where is the "root" of women's oppression located? What is sexual objectification? How does</p>	<p>Dow, <i>Watching Women's Liberation, 1970</i>            (M) Andrea Dworkin, "Against the Male Flood: Censorship, Equality, and Pornography," <i>Harvard Women's</i></p>	

	<p>pornography participate in the sexual objectification of women? Is pornography liberating or oppressing? What is the male gaze?</p>	<p><i>Law Journal</i> 8 (1985): 1-29.  (M) Laura Mulvey, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" <i>Screen</i> 16 (1975): 6-18.  (M) Carol Queen &amp; Lynn Comella, "The Necessary Revolution: Sex-Positive Feminism in the Post-Barnard Era," <i>The Communication Review</i> 11 (2008): 274-291.</p>	
2/11	<p><b>Identity Politics and The Question of Woman</b>  One of the major debates within feminist theories has been over what feminism is and who it is fighting for. Can we know what our "identity" is? How do Cultural identities become a resource for understanding oppression/perspective? How can we study the category of "women" without excluding "others"? What are "identity politics"? Are they important when organizing for social justice? How do we fight inequality between categories without categorizing?</p>	<p>(M) hooks "Feminism: A Movement to End Sexist Oppression."  (M) Judith Butler, "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire" in <i>Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity</i> (New York: Routledge, 1990).  (M) Linda Alcoff, "Cultural Feminism versus Post-Structuralism: The Identity Crisis in Feminist Theory," <i>Signs</i> 13 (Spring, 1988): 405-436.</p>	
2/18	<p><b>Feminisms of Color</b>  In what ways did the feminist movement fail to address issues of race? Class? What is intersectionality? How can we do criticism from an intersectional perspective? How do we avoid privileging one standpoint over another?</p>	<p>Patricia Hill Collins, <i>Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender, and the New Racism</i> (New York: Routledge, 2005).  Karma Chavez, ed., <i>Standing at the Intersection: Feminist Voices, Feminist Practices in Communication Studies</i> (New York: SUNY Press, 2012).  (M) Gloria Anzaldua, "La conciencia de la Mestiza: Towards a New Consciousness," <i>Borderlands: The New Mestiza = La Frontera</i> (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1999): 99-120.</p>	<p><b>** Essay Topic Proposal Due**</b></p>
2/25	<p><b>NO CLASS – MARDI GRAS!!!</b></p>		
3/3	<p><b>Transnational and "Other" World Perspectives</b>  What role has colonialism played in shaping feminist political theory? How do Western feminist perspectives ignore the subaltern? What is the subaltern? What is the "Third World"?</p>	<p>Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, <i>A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present</i> (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999).  (M) Excerpt from: Chandra Talpade Mohanty, <i>Feminisms without Borders: Decolonizing Theory,</i></p>	



		<i>Practicing Solidarity</i> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).	
3/10	<b>Gray Lecture - Queer Rhetorician Chuck Morris!</b>	(M) Charles Morris III, <i>Context's Critic</i> (M) Charles Morris III, <i>Archival Queer</i> (M) Charles Morris III, <i>Pink Herring</i>	
3/17	<b>Neoliberalism &amp; The Post-Feminist Context</b> Some have argued that we are currently living in the age of post-feminism. Post feminism is a body of literature that is a reaction to feminist and gender theory of the 60s, 70s, and 80s. How has feminism failed as a politic? Has feminism succeeded? Is there a need for it anymore? Has feminism participated in the creation of more inequality?	Hestor Eisenstein, <i>Feminism Seduced: How Global Elites Use Women's Labor and Ideas to Exploit the World</i> , (New York: Paradigm, 2010). Sarah Projanksy, <i>Watching Rape: Film and Television in Post-Feminist Culture</i> (New York: New York University Press, 2001).	
3/24	<b>NO CLASS SPRING BREAK</b>		
3/31	<b>Queer Beginnings &amp; Radical Constructivism</b> Queer theory began as a reaction to feminist theories and politics that failed to account for fluidity and ambivalence. What is radical constructivism and how is it a response to previous theories about gender and oppression? Where is agency located in these new theories about "queer"?	Erin J. Rand, <i>Reclaiming Queer: Activist &amp; Academic Rhetorics of Resistance</i> (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2014). (M) Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory" <i>Theatre Journal</i> , 40 (1988): 519-531.	
4/7	<b>Queering Institutions</b> Queering institutions and histories is an important politic within the broader queer movement. How does a critic "queer" an artifact or institution?	Isaac West, <i>Transforming Citizenships: Transgender Articulations of the Law</i> (New York: NYU Press, 2013). (M) Excerpt from Michael Warner, <i>The Trouble with Normal</i>	<b>**Thesis Proposal due**</b>
4/14	<b>Disidentifications Part I</b> To be critically queer is to maintain a posture of ambivalence towards politics, theories, and texts. Considering this, queer theorists of color and nation have adopted a politic of disidentification. How do we queer queer theories?	José Esteban Muñoz, <i>Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics</i> (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1999). (M) Excerpt from: Roderick A. Ferguson, <i>Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique</i> (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003). ISBN-13: 978-0816641291	

4/21	<b>Disidentifications Part II</b>	Jasbir K. Puar, <i>Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times</i> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). ISBN-13: 978-0822341147	<b>**First Draft of Essay Due**</b>
4/28	<b>Queer Futurity &amp; World Making</b> What does a queer future look like? How does a queer politic translate in to queer politics?	(M) Excerpt from: José Esteban Muñoz, <i>Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity</i> (New York: NYU Press, 2009). ISBN-13: 978-0814757284 Lee Edelman, <i>No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive</i> (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004). ISBN-13: 978-0822333692 (M) Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, "Sex in Public" <i>Critical Inquiry</i> 24 (Winter, 1998): 547-566.	<b>**Peer Reviews Due**</b>
TH 5/5	<b>Paper Presentations &amp; Course Wrap Up</b>		<b>***Final Essays Due**</b>