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# GSS201 | Feminist and Queer Theories

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MW 8:05-9:20, Chambers 2198

Gayle Kaufman (she/they)

This class seeks to expand students' knowledge of the epistemological and theoretical foundations of Gender and Sexuality Studies. We explore the different theoretical traditions that inform contemporary gender analysis, looking at how various feminist and queer thinkers have understood the meanings of gender and sexuality. We examine scholarly definitions of gender and sexuality and consider the divergent interpretations of the roots of these social and cultural divisions and categories. We discuss the means by which gender and sexuality are produced and reproduced at the individual and institutional levels, their intersection with other dimensions of social difference, as well as various related approaches to and interpretations of equality, justice, and freedom.

Fulfills: Justice, Equality, and Community (JEC) requirement, Social-Scientific Thought ways of knowing requirement, Sociology major requirement, Gender and Sexuality Studies major and minor requirement, Communication Studies minor requirement

## Learning Outcomes

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By the end of the semester, you should be able to:

- Identify and distinguish between major theories of how gender and sexuality are constructed at the individual and societal levels
- Understand the uses and limitations of a variety of queer and feminist theoretical lenses, including liberalism, radicalism, discourse analysis, psychoanalysis, Marxism/materialism, social constructivism, and performativity
- Understand the connections between queer and feminist theories and activism

### Texts

- Foucault, M. 1978. *The history of sexuality: An introduction, vol. 1*. Penguin.
- Halberstam, J. 2018. *Trans\*: A quick and quirky account of gender variability*. University of California Press.
- All other readings are available on Moodle



## Assignments

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**Participation:** Because we learn from conversation with each other, attendance and active participation are important to our class success.

- **Attendance:** You may miss two classes without penalty. Each additional absence will affect your participation grade.
- **Participation:** You should strive to participate actively in all class discussions and to come to class prepared with questions and comments on the week's readings. You should aim to participate in general class discussion (not including small group activities) *at least* once a week. I am happy to discuss during office hours strategies for increasing participation at any point in the course.
- **Events:** You are expected to attend two GSS-related events (I will announce events in class and/or by e-mail). You should email me a 2-3 sentence description of the event within 48 hours of attending each event. This will count toward your participation grade.

**Discussion Leadership:** In pairs, you will be responsible for facilitating discussion during one class period. This entails:

1. Background – provide relevant context for the reading. This may include author background; key concepts, points, or debates in the reading; connections to other theories/readings.
2. Facilitator – lead the class through an activity or discussion related to the day's reading(s). You may pose questions, facilitate a group activity, etc. Feel free to be creative.

**Portfolio of Argument Summaries:** For every reading, you should jot down in your notes:

1. A summary of the main argument
2. 1 or more key concepts
3. 1-2 quotes
4. At least 1 connection to ideas in other readings

These summaries will help you participate in class discussion. You will turn in a portfolio of your argument summaries on October 9 and December 4.

## OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

**Drop in office hours** – no appointment necessary

- Mondays 10:30-12:00 in Preyer 104
- Wednesdays 12:30-2:00 at Commons (Sociology table)

**Scheduled office hours** – please **email** to schedule an appointment during these times

- Tuesdays 2:30-4:30
- Fridays 2:00-5:00

Please feel free to stop by the GSS table at Commons on Mondays 11:30-1:30 (I will join as my schedule permits during the second half)

**Contact me:**

- [gakaufman@davidson.edu](mailto:gakaufman@ davidson.edu)
- 704-894-2485

Email is the best way to contact me outside of class and office hours. I will do my best to respond to you within 24 hours Monday through Friday. I may take longer to respond over weekends or breaks.

## Assessment

**Artifact Analysis Essay:** Write an essay (750-1000 words) examining a popular cultural artifact (public performance, a series of music videos, an advertising campaign, a social media phenomenon, etc.). Your analysis should be informed by the insights and debates central to gender and sexuality studies. Consider: how can you apply theory to understand the artifact? How does your object of study contribute to debates within gender and sexuality studies? Remember, one of the things we are challenging in this course is which genres and sites of knowledge production are prioritized when we talk about theory. Due September 30.

**Current Event Essay:** Write an essay (750-1000 words) that puts a current event in dialogue with one or more of the texts covered on our syllabus. Your analysis should be informed by the insights and debates central to gender and sexuality studies. Consider: how can you apply theory to understand the event? How does this current event contribute to debates within gender and sexuality studies? Remember, one of the things we are challenging in this course is which genres and sites of knowledge production are prioritized when we talk about theory. Due November 11.

**Final Exam:** This exam will cover key terms and concepts from the readings and discussion. It will include essays in which you will respond to scenarios by applying theory. This will be a take home exam to be completed during the exam period. Due December 18.

### 5 means of assessment:

- 1) Participation = 15%
- 2) Discussion leader = 15%
- 3) Portfolio = 15%
- 4) Essays = 30%
- 5) Final exam = 25%

### Grading scale:

- A = 93-100
- A- = 90-92
- B+ = 87-89
- B = 83-86
- B- = 80-82
- C+ = 77-79
- C = 73-76
- C- = 70-72
- D+ = 67-69
- D = 60-66
- F = <60

### Davidson College Honor Code

Each Davidson student is honor bound to refrain from stealing, lying about College business, and cheating on academic work. Please refer to the Honor Code: <https://www.davidson.edu/about/distinctly-davidson/honor-code>

## Access Statement

*The college welcomes requests for accommodations related to disability and will grant those that are determined to be reasonable and maintain the integrity of a program or curriculum. To make such a request or to begin a conversation about a possible request, please contact the Office of Academic Access and Disability Resources, which is located in the Center for Teaching and Learning in the E.H. Little Library: Beth Bleil, Director, [bebleil@davidson.edu](mailto:bebleil@davidson.edu), 704-894-2129; or Alysen Beaty, Assistant Director, [albeaty@davidson.edu](mailto:albeaty@davidson.edu), 704-894-2939. It is best to submit accommodation requests within the drop/add period; however, requests can be made at any time in the semester. Please keep in mind that accommodations are not retroactive.*

## Reading Schedule

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### Week 1 | Introduction to Theory

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- M 8/26** Introductions, Roxane Gay's TED talk – Confessions of a bad feminist
- W 8/28** \*hooks, b. 1991. Theory as liberatory practice. *Yale Journal of Law and Feminism*, 4, 1-12.  
\*Lugones, M. C., & Spelman, E. V. 1983. Have we got a theory for you! Feminist theory, cultural imperialism and the demand for 'the woman's voice.' *Women's Studies International Forum*, 6, 573-581.

### Week 2 | Psychoanalysis and Sexual Development

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- M 9/2** \*Freud, "Infantile sexuality" (1905) and "Femininity" (1933), chapters from *The standard edition of the complete psychological works of Sigmund Freud*. London: The Hogarth Press.
- W 9/4** \*Mulvey, L. 1975. Visual pleasure and narrative cinema. *Screen*, 16, 6-18.

### Week 3 | Power/Knowledge

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- M 9/9** \*Foucault, *History of sexuality*, parts I and II
- W 9/11** \*Foucault, *History of sexuality*, parts III and IV (thru p. 114)

### Week 4 | Performing Gender

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- M 9/16** \*West, C., & Zimmerman, D. H. 1987. Doing gender. *Gender and Society*, 1, 125-151.
- W 9/18** \*Butler, J. 1990. "Subjects of sex/gender/desire" (chapter 1) and "Bodily inscriptions, performative subversion" (chapter 3, part IV) from *Gender Trouble*. New York: Routledge.

### Week 5 | Masculinities

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- M 9/23** \*Connell, R. W. 1987. *Gender and Power*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, pp. 183-188.  
\*Hearn, J. 2004. From hegemonic masculinity to the hegemony of men. *Feminist Theory*, 5, 49-72.
- W 9/25** \*Anderson, E. 2012. *Inclusive masculinities: The changing nature of masculinities*. London: Routledge, pp. 93-101, 114-123, 137-151.

### Week 6 | Burning Tensions

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- M 9/30** \*Documentary – *Paris Is Burning*, dir. Livingston (1990)
- W 10/2** \*Butler, "Gender Is burning" (1993)  
\*hooks, "Is Paris burning?" (1992)

## Week 7 | Postcolonial Feminisms

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- M 10/7** \*Mohanty, C. T. 1984. Under western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *boundary*, 12/13, 333-358.
- W 10/9** \*Collins, P. H. 1993. The social construction of black feminist thought. *Signs*, 14, 745-773.

## Week 8 | Postcolonial Feminisms

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- M 10/14** *No class – Fall break*
- W 10/16** \*Arvin, M., Tuck, E., and Morrill, A. 2013. Decolonizing feminism: Challenging connections between settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy. *Feminist Formations*, 25, 8-34.

## Week 9 | Liberalism and Its Discontents

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- M 10/21** \*Duggan. 2002. The new homonormativity: The sexual politics of neoliberalism. In R. Castronovo and D. D. Nelson (Eds.), *Materializing democracy: Toward a revitalized cultural politics* (pp. 175-194). Durham: Duke University Press.
- W 10/23** \*Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, part V

## Weeks 10 | Liberalism and Its Discontents

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- M 10/28** \*Puar, J. K. 2007. *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times*. Durham: Duke University Press. Read the introduction plus look at images in chapters 1-2 (online at DC library).
- W 10/30** \*Morgensen, S. L. 2010. Settler homonationalism: Theorizing settler colonialism within queer modernities. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*, 16, 105-131.

## Week 11 | Gender and the Welfare State

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- M 11/4** \*Fraser, N. 1994. After the family wage: Gender equity and the welfare state. *Political Theory*, 22, 591-618.
- W 11/6** \*Rubery, J. 2015. Regulating for gender equality: A policy framework to support the universal caregiver vision. *Social Politics*, 22, 513-538.

## Week 12 | Bodies and Political Economies

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- M 11/11** \*Halberstam, *Trans\**, chapters 1-3
- W 11/13** \*Halberstam, *Trans\**, chapters 5-6

## Week 13 | Feminism and Politics

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- M 11/18** \*Selections from *Nasty Women*
- W 11/20** \*Selections from *Nasty Women*

Week 14 | Writing

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**M 11/25** \*Writing workshop

Week 15 | All the Feels

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**M 12/2** \*Ahmed, S. 2010. [Feminist killjoys](#) (and other willful subjects). *SC&F Online*, 8.3.

**W 12/4** \*Wrap up and course evaluations