The Sexuality/Gender Intersection

Central European University
Department of Gender Studies
Academic year of 2012/2013
Winter Term
4 credits

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Course Description:
The course is designed to advance a dialogue about the implications of the various theorizations of the categories of sex, gender, and sexuality in the past three decades, assuming as its basic premise that these categories come to mean different things in different disciplines and so should not be collapsed into each other. Based on the critical readings of both classic and recent texts, we shall explore the insights and subversive potential we can gain from ‘gender’, the key concept of feminism/s (as of the 1970s) and that of ‘sexuality’ developed by radical feminists as well as by (the 1990s generation of) Queer Theory. Our ultimate aim is to destabilize the non-productive dichotomy between feminist vs. queer theorizations of women’s everyday life. The course is hoped to seek a more integrative account of the complex hegemonic relations between gender and sexuality. The ultimate aim informing the weekly discussion of texts concerns the destabilization of the (theoretically) assumed reductive continuities between anatomical sex, social gender, gender identity, sexual practice, sexual desire, and sexual identity while arguing for their relative differentiation. In other words, queer theorists’ knowledge production will be a helpful criticism of most feminist theories’ bracketing of (hetero)sexuality based on some separation of anatomical sex and social gender. Yet, we shall also challenge queer non-foundationalist ahistorical celebrations of sexualities as if playful de-centered performative acts, postulating woman as dematerialized and disembodied signification of fun only.

Each week comprises two classes in a lecture versus follow-up seminar format.

Assessment:
Participants’ performance will be based on the following grounds:
1. Participation in classroom discussions of weekly readings based on (2-3) critical questions addressed to the actual texts – to be written up and printed out for each weekly reading. Performance in classroom discussion and delivery of the questions will put the final grade one notch up or down the scale – based on the quality of the in class exam paper. Late submission policy: No late submission of questions is possible. Questions are to orient the second class of the week. If students cannot prepare the questions in exceptional cases (such as illness with a proof), they should notify the instructor in an e-mail (at least the previous day).
2. In class (closed book) exam in the last class: Students will develop their reflections on some particular issues raised by the instructor in relation to a given text.
Topics to be covered on a weekly basis:

1. Introduction: Sex in question. From the arbitrary sex/gender relation to a systematic dissymmetry obtaining between male/female and feminine/masculine.
3. Socialization theories and the unproblematic status of sex: Why should sex give rise to any sort of decontextualized classification? How can it be extended successfully to all domains of activity beyond that of procreation?
4. The co-optability of a political project arguing for re-education vs. the historically and culturally specific imaginary body.
5. Transexualism as the critical potential to expose and understand the valorization of the ‘masculine male’ instead of subscribing to a masculinization of ‘woman’.
6. Gendered forms of sexualities: Diversity of sexual preferences and practices.
7. The problematization of heterosexuality: Against a disillusionment with the explanatory force of the concept of ideology in the analysis of women’s oppression.
8. Performativity of gender: Collapsing sexuality and gender?
10. Transgender studies’ critique of queer theory.
11. ‘Political correctness’ in the academy and the production of ‘cultivated citizens’ and the backlash that fosters ‘womanism’ over ‘feminism’.
12. Rethinking the politics of naming: The lost political edge of queer critique?
13. In-class exam.

Readings:

Week 1:

Week 2:
Week 3:

Week 4:

Week 5:

Week 6:

Week 7:

Week 8:

Week 9:
Week 10:

Week 11:

Week 12: