Course description: The word “queer” refers to a number of things in contemporary globalized multiculturalism whose cultural currency in neoliberal capitalism provided the platform of its vast circulatory power in contemporary progressive culture. In all of its uses, however, it gathers reference from sexual perversion to sexual dissidence, and in scholarly works it marks a commitment to the critique of the foundational assumptions of multiculturalism. This critique shows that these assumptions (on identity and sexuality, for instance) are necessarily heteronormative and biopolitical. But, to put it simply, the reason word “queer” as we use it in progressive politics (and most of us use the English term in our native language). Queer theory can be thought of as an academic expression of a non-apologetic anti-assimilationist politics relying heavily on the theoretical resources provided by late-20th century poststructuralist theories (Foucault, Derrida, Deleuze) on the violence of Western culture.

This course will look at the political stakes in the division between heterosexuality and other forms of sexuality in particular and interrogates the category of “normal” in general. It is organized around some key concepts fuelling both the thinking of sexuality and the directions of LGBT movements since 1969. The objective of the course is to give an introduction to the poststructuralist body of queer theory. The purpose of the course is to foster critical thinking about the aspects of our, and others’, lives we think of as “sexuality” as well as to highlight some basic heteronormative assumptions in modern social thought.

Learning outcomes: At the end of the course, students will be familiar with the main questions within queer theory (the poststructuralist body of scholarship interrogating sexual normalcy as a political phenomenon) and will be competent in navigating among its main concepts, concerns and questions. Their analytical skills will be improved by the close reading of texts that demand an attention to counter-intuitive reflexivity and therefore improve their skills to engage in independent, critical scholarship. The oral and written assignments help students to improve their skills to articulate their thoughts as academic questions and problems.

Requirements:
This is a reading-intensive course. You need to come to class having read the assignments and ready to discuss them. The requirements are designed to fit the difficult reading load of the course and to improve specific skills of academic writing.

Class participation:
You are required to attend class consistently. Please come to class having read, and bringing with you, the assigned texts. Your active participation (listening as well as speaking) will be expected. In general, the more active class participation is in a class, the more intellectually stimulating it becomes, so I hope that you will always share your thoughts during discussion. You may miss one class without formal documentation of illness or any other case of vis major. Please let me know in advance if you know you won’t come to class.

Exegetic paragraphs (detailed but concise summary of an idea or an argument without any interpretation or critique):
There is a specific key term or idea identified in almost all of the readings. You find these underlined after the respective text in the schedule. You will have to write brief exegetic summaries of most of these terms (cca. one 300-word paragraph per exegesis). These exegetic paragraphs will be due in two sets of 6, one at mid-term time
covering the readings from Week 1 to 6, the other at the end of the course covering texts from Week 7 to 12. The first exegetic paragraph will be due the second class. You can later include this one or a revised version of it in your midterm set.

Here are a few tips to write effective exegetic paragraphs:

- Imagine that a friend wants you to explain this concept or idea. How would you explain this concept to someone who hasn’t read the text?
- Abstain from referring to other texts
- Paraphrase: minimize quoting
- Introduce the concept: where is it employed and what is its general significance (what does the author want to do with it)?
- What does the author mean by this concept?
- How does this concept fit into the argument of the text?
- Make it economical: don’t leave out anything really important (really important is anything that helps the argument move forward) and don’t repeat anything.

Here are a few tips for giving constructive feedback:

- Commend points that make a paragraph effective and helpful
- Commend points where you think the writer was successful in communicating difficult points in their own voice
- Point out places where you are not sure you understand the point
- Point out where you think grammar issues make the point harder to come across
- Indicate where you find repetitions unhelpful
- Indicate where you think paraphrasing would be more helpful instead of quoting
- Indicate if you’ve missed a point or component which would have made the paragraph more comprehensive or helpful
- Offer clarification where you think appropriate

**Grading:**

Attendance and participation: 20%
Exegetic paragraphs: 40% for the midterm set and 40% for the final set

**Note on extensions:** If you need an extension on any of the deadlines, email me at least two days prior to the deadline (I will most likely grant an extension). I may not honor requests that come in last minute. I will most probably not honor requests about the deadline for giving peer feedback.

**Note on plagiarism:** It is your responsibility to make sure that your written work does not include any plagiarism (make sure you clearly mark your notes including quotations for yourself in order to avoid accidentally pasting them in your text). Any assignment found containing plagiarism will receive an F with no possibility of rewriting and you’ll receive an email notification of the problem. Any recurrence may result in failing the course.

**Electronic policy:**

Please don’t use your laptops in class. I ask you to bring your readings in hard copy (tablets are negotiable; phones are fine) and take notes by hand on paper. Here are a few relevant articles:

- [https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/students-are-better-off-without-a-laptop-in-the-classroom/](https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/students-are-better-off-without-a-laptop-in-the-classroom/)
- [https://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/2015/08/laptop-use-effects-learning-attention/](https://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/2015/08/laptop-use-effects-learning-attention/)
Concerns
If you have a concern regarding any part of the above syllabus, including especially the fulfilment of course requirements, please email me for an appointment before the end of the registration period so that we can discuss the possibilities of accommodating these concerns.

Schedule

week 1: Intro
Session 1

Session 2


week 2: Foucault
Session 1
*History of Sexuality* continued

Session 2

week 3: “Sexuality”
Session 1

Session 2

week 4: Kindred spirits
Session 1

Session 2

week 5: Protest
Session 1

Session 2
Bersani continued

week 6: “Lesbian”
Session 1:

Session 2
Butler continued.
First set of 6 exegetic paragraphs due in hard copy, Eszter’s mailbox

week 7:
Session 1

Session 2

week 8: Eve Sedgwick: from paranoid to reparative
Session 1


Session 2
Sedgwick continued

week 9
Session 1 “Bisexuality”

Session 2
(Almost) Midterm discussion—no assigned reading
Week 10: Queer colors/ Trans

Session 1


Session 2


week 11: Homonormativity and homonationalism

Session 1


Session 2


week 12: Belonging

Session 1


Session 2
Second set of 6 exegetic paragraphs due on Friday, hard copy, Eszter’s mailbox in 506.

No readings: end of term discussion

This syllabus is subject to change.