The Nature of Performativity
Fall 2018
Thursdays 1:30-3:10, Z 412

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Description
The course examines the concept of performativity, one of the important terms in our research of gender and sexuality. The course traces its development in philosophy, its introduction to feminist and queer inquiry, and examines its complicated relationship to the concept of nature: we will look at the development of the concept of performativity in speech act theory and deconstruction which enabled its productive work in Gender Studies exemplified by the work of Judith Butler and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick who look at ways in which performativity helps us better understand gendered embodiment and affect. We will also trace the queerness of performativity to discussions of femininity and theatricality. We will close with readings from new materialism to see how performativity helps reconfigure the concept of nature.

Learning outcomes: Students will be familiar with the development and the genealogy of the concept of performativity in in feminist and queer theory and develop an introductory competence in how this genealogy influenced feminist new materialism. The oral and written assignments help students to improve their skills to articulate their thoughts as academic questions and problems and to make scholarly arguments.

Requirements
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. Generally, 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.

Discussion leading every student will be responsible for leading one 30-40 minute discussion (depending on class size). Please prepare 3 to 5 questions about the assigned article(s) You will be asked to wait until others have responded to the questions before you may share your views on the question. Assessment will be based on the thoughtfulness of the questions and your facilitation of the conversation.

Written assignments:
During the semester, you are required to write three analytic response papers on the weekly readings. It’s up to you which weeks you write your three responses, but the first text response should be submitted by Week 4.
Guidelines for Analytic Response Papers

An AR paper is around 800-1000 words long, and should be posted on the course e-learning site by 4 am on the day of the relevant class. Papers should be posted in student folder for the corresponding week of discussing the text.

Below are the detailed guidelines for analytic response papers.

The purpose of the assignment is to create a space for you to think about the texts, and to articulate your questions, interpretations, and critiques. These papers will also help you to prepare for class discussion, and may be shared with the class. You’re encouraged to read your classmates’ posts as well.

A response paper is expected to demonstrate your analytic engagement with the texts – more than simple summaries or criticisms based on an already-assumed position of truth and/or justice. There are several ways you can engage with this assignment. However, a strong analytic response often

(1), offers a close reading of a sentence, a phrase, or even a concept that intrigues you the most, and discuss how and why it intrigues you: how do you interpret the chosen part – what are the argument, the contingency, and the tension in this part, and how does this part relate to the main argument of the author, and what are its theoretical and political implications;

(2) begins with what is most confusing or difficult to grasp in the materials. Try to develop it into a discussion question; we might actually discuss it in class. Can you find any clue in the text? What would be your hypothetical response to your own question, based on that textual clue?;

(3) develops a point based on analyses interrogating the implicit argument, the contingency, the tension, and the potential of the identified element(s) in the text, discussing their theoretical and political implications.

In this light, I’d like to push you to dwell upon the given materials for close and attentive engagement – and for that reason, please avoid drawing upon outside material.

While an analytic response paper is less formal than a typical research paper, it should nonetheless be taken more seriously than a usual reaction paper.

An analytic response paper will be graded based on the following criteria: relevance to the text, critical and creative analyses, thoughtful and critical reflections, and stylistic performance. Also, the progress you’ve made during the course will be factored into the grades.

Please make sure your paper has a title, it has your name on it, it has page numbers and includes the word count.
**Grading:**
Attendance and participation: 15%
Reaction paper: 25% each

**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 which is 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 and take notes by hand on paper. You can find several articles online justifying this, here are a few (and please note the irony):

- http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away
- https://www.sciencemag.org/ptm/2016/04/28/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away
- https://teachingcenter.wustl.edu/2015/08/laptop-use-effects-learning-attention/
- https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/students-are-better-off-without-a-laptop-in-the-classroom/
- http://www.npr.org/2016/04/17/474525392/attention-students-put-your-laptops-away

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Schedule:

**Week 1:**
Introduction of the course

**Week 2:**
Recommended: lectures VIII and IX

**Week 3:**

**Week 4:**

**Week 5:**
David Halperin: “The Democratic Body: Prostitution and Citizenship in Classical Athens,” in *One Hundred Years of Homosexuality and Other Essays on Greek Love* (New York: Routledge, 1990), pp. 88-113

**Week 6:**

**Week 7**
Week 8:

Week 9:


Week 10:


Week 11:


Week 12:

This syllabus is subject to change.