Course description: Structuralist and poststructuralist theories strive to understand the nature of social construction—a concept as important to the humanities as it is for the so-called social sciences. Affect theory is a heterogeneous body of theoretical works that strives to understand social construction as a process that is continuously enacted in embodied ways that cannot fail to precede and participate in the formation of what is called the individual, the person, the self, the subject. Across citational intolerances, affect theory aims to show the prepersonal and intersubjective resonances of sensation or feeling as absolutely necessary for the thought of political agency. It draws on the philosophically somewhat aligned or overlapping, as well as combatively conflicted schools of thought that developed out of the appreciation/development of and the frustration with psychoanalysis. Arguably, we can distinguish two legacies in affect theory: a Deleuzean line stressing the philosophical legacies of Spinoza and Bergson, and a Silvan Tomkins line in which Tomkins is read by a diverse range of texts in feminist and queer theory. The course will introduce some the foundations of psychoanalysis relevant for feminist and queer theory as well as affect theory followed by texts representing both of these legacies and also showcase some examples relevant for current, interjectionally attentive, questions of feminist and queer theory (such as xenophobia, the environment, or disability studies).

Learning outcomes: At the end of the course, students will be familiar with some founding arguments of psychoanalytic theories. Students will also understand the main theoretical questions animating affect theories and will have an understanding of how these relate to each other. After the course, students will be able to independently read theoretical texts working with the idea of affect and contextualize these theoretically. They will also be able to use affect theory in their own analytic projects.

Requirements:
Class participation will include group presentations, and there will be one written assignment in the form of a 2500-3000 word paper.

Class participation:
You are required to attend class consistently. Please come to class having read, and bringing with you, the hard copy of 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.

Facilitating discussion:
The time and organization of this component will depend on class size and we will design it together.
Grading:

Paper 50%
Paper proposal (with the possibility of one revision) 30%
Attendance and participation 20%

Note on extensions: If you need an extension, 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.

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 guaranteed possibility of rewriting and you’ll receive an email notification of the problem.

Schedule

week 1:
Introduction to the course.

week 2:

week 3:

week 4:


week 5:


week 6:

week 7:

week 8:


week 9:

week 10:

week 11:

week 12:

This syllabus is subject to change.