

**LT348: Queer(ing) Narratives: Race, Gender and Sexuality in America**

Class times: Fridays, 9am – 12:15pm CET (online as an OSUN course)

**Zoom link (same every week):**

[https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86356578637?pwd=d5K8WYGIQWIIDaGbbPX2w5cmIVN5Zk.](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/86356578637?pwd=d5K8WYGIQWIIDaGbbPX2w5cmIVN5Zk.1)

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**Meeting ID: 863 5657 8637**

**Passcode: 9QJyK7**

Seminar Leader: Kathy-Ann Tan

Email: k.tan@berlin.bard.edu

Office Hours: by appointment

**Course Description**

This seminar engages with queer theory as well as ways of queering dominant narratives and visual representations in an American context. We will examine how the racialized and sexualized body is represented and regulated in dominant discourses and images, and how Queer of Color and intersectional feminist strategies of resistance complicate and challenge such normative forms of narration and representation. Our theoretical readings will begin (but certainly not end!) with Judith Butler's notion of gender performativity, and include texts by Anna Cheng on racial melancholy, bell hooks on black female spectatorship, Patricia Hill Collins on black sexual politics, José Muñoz on disidentification, and Jasbir Puar on homonationalism. We will bring these theories to bear on a range of contemporary literary texts, films and images that address the intersections of race, gender and sexuality.

**Readings include:**

Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics"

Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory"

Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*

José Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*.

Dionne Brand, *No Language is Neutral* (poetry)

Anna Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race*

Billy-Ray Belcourt, *The Wound is a World* (poetry)

Patricia Hill Collins. *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender and the New Racism*

Richard M. Juang, "Transgendering the Politics of Recognition".

Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*.

Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous* (epistolary novel)

Barry Jenkins (dir.) *Moonlight*. (film)

Cheryl Dunye (dir). *The Watermelon Woman* (film)

**All of the reading material will be made available electronically.**

## **Requirements**

### **Academic Integrity**

Bard College Berlin maintains the highest standards of academic integrity and expects students to adhere to these standards at all times. Instances in which students fail to meet the expected standards of academic integrity will be dealt with under the Code of Student Conduct, Section 14.3 (Academic Misconduct) in the Student Handbook.

### **Attendance**

Attendance at all classes is a crucial part of the education offered by Bard College Berlin. To account for minor circumstances, two absences from twice-per-week courses or the equivalent (e.g. one absence from a once-per-week course) should not affect the participation grade or require documentation.

Bard College Berlin does not offer credit for any course in which a student has missed more than 30% of classes, regardless of the reasons for the absences. The full Bard College Berlin attendance policy can be found in the Student Handbook, Section 2.8.

### **Assignments**

This course has two essay assignments: one mid-semester and one end of semester essay (**5000 – 7000 words in total**). It also has informal assignments, including giving presentations on readings and writing reading responses and/or discussion questions in advance of seminar meetings. Since this is a seminar, active and informed participation in class is a required and graded element of the course.

### **Policy on Late Submission of Papers**

Essays that are up to 24 hours late can be downgraded up to one full grade (from B+ to C+, for example). Instructors are not obliged to accept essays that are more than 24 hours late. Where a professor agrees to accept a late assignment, it should be submitted by the new deadline agreed upon by both parties. Thereafter, the student will receive a failing grade for the assignment. Grades and comments will be returned to students in a timely fashion. Students are also entitled to make an appointment to discuss essay assignments and feedback during instructors' office hours.

Students receive mid- and end-of-semester grades for their seminar work. Students are entitled to make an appointment with an instructor to discuss seminar participation, or may be asked to meet with the instructor at any stage in the semester regarding class progress.

### **Assessment and Grade Breakdown:**

Class Participation: 30%

Mid-term essay: 30%

Final Essay: 40%

### **Essay Deadlines**

**Mid-term essay due:** Friday March 22, 2024 at 12 noon

**Final essays due:** for graduating students: Wednesday May 17, 2024 at 12 noon

For all other students: Wednesday May 31, 2024 at 12 noon

**All essays are to be submitted electronically via email: (k.tan@berlin.bard.edu).**

## **Schedule**

### **Week 1 – February 2. What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now?**

Reading: Cathy Cohen’s “Punks, Bulldaggers, and Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics”

Topics: What’s Queer about Queer Studies Now? What is the status quo of Queer Studies in academia?

### **Week 2 – February 9. Introduction to Queer Theory**

Reading: Excerpts from Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory” and Judith Butler, *Bodies that Matter*

Topics: The beginnings of queer theory and queer studies

### **Week 3 – February 16. Queer of Color and performance as political intervention**

Reading: Excerpt from José Muñoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* and Vaginal Davis’ Terrorist Drag Performative Lecture at GenderFest Athens

2017: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eN1pIWMJfyw> <

Topics: Queer of color performance, art and politics

### **Week 4 – February 23. Racial Melancholy, Queer Feelings.**

Reading: Excerpts from Anna Cheng, *The Melancholy of Race* and Ocean Vuong, *On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous*. Watch Ocean Vuong’s reading at Strand Bookshop:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fjTiLodYG3Y>

Topics: racial melancholy, queer diaspora

**Week 5 – March 1. Mid-term essay colloquium** – Bring your ideas and outlines for your mid-term essays and we will discuss them and give each other feedback, comments and suggestions. You will have 5-7 mins each to present your mid-term essay outline and then have 5 mins of feedback from everyone else. Please stick to time! 😊

**Week 6 – March 8. No class – Women’s Day (State public holiday in Berlin)**

**Week 7 – March 15. Queering the Gaze in Black film part 1.**

Reading: Excerpt from Patricia Hill Collins. *Black Sexual Politics: African Americans, Gender and the New Racism* and Barry Jenkins’ *Moonlight* (film)

Topics: Queering the gaze in Black film, the queer Black gaze at the Oscars

**Week 8 – March 22. Queering the Gaze in Black film part 2.**

Reading: bell hooks’ “The Oppositional Gaze” and Cheryl Dunye (dir). *The Watermelon Woman* (film)

Topics: Queering the gaze in Black film, genre of the mockmentary, queer(ing) narratives

**+++Mid Term essays due: Friday, March 22, 2024 at 12 noon.+++**

**Week 9 – March 29. No class. Spring Break (Monday, March 25 – Monday, April 1)**

**Week 10 – April 5. Invited guest speaker(s). Tbc.**

**Week 11 – April 12. Queer and Trans\* resistance in poetic narratives**

Readings: Richard M. Juang, “Transgendering the Politics of Recognition” and excerpts from Billy-Ray Belcourt’s *The Wound is a World* (poetry) and Dionne Brand’s *No Language is Neutral* (poetry)

Topics: Indigenous queer and trans voices and queer(ing) wor(l)ds

**Week 12 – April 19. Queer(ing) visual narratives in art. Part 1**

Reading: The works of Naima Green, Salman Toor and Shikeith and others. Links to artworks will be provided.

Topics: Choose one example of an artist/artwork to bring to class and share!

**Week 13 – April 26. Queer(ing) visual narratives in art. Part 2**

Reading: The works of Zanele Muholi, Mickalene Thomas, Julie Mehretu and Laura Aguilar and others. Links to artworks will be provided.

Choose one example of an artist/artwork to bring to class and share!

**Week 14 – May 3. Queer(ing) visual narratives in musical and spoken word narratives.**

Reading: The songs and lyrics of Janelle Monáe, Jamila Woods, Serpentwithfeet, Alok Vaid-Menon, and others. Links to online (music) videos will be provided.

**Week 15 – May 10. Homonormativity and pinkwashing**

Reading: Excerpt from Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*.

Topics: Homonormativity and pinkwashing, incl. some examples from politics and daily life

**Week 16 – May 17. No Class (Completion week: May 13 – May 17)**

***Final essays due: for graduating students: Wednesday May 17, 2024 at 12 noon***

***For all other students: Wednesday May 31, 2024 at 12 noon***