

Advanced Theory and Application of Feminist, LGBTQI, and Queer Studies

GEND 3500 (3 credits)

The Netherlands: International Perspectives on Sexuality and Gender

This syllabus is representative of a typical semester. Because courses develop and change over time to take advantage of unique learning opportunities, actual course content varies from semester to semester.

Course Description

Queer theory developed in the 90s largely to analyze the gay community but has grown into something so much more. So much more, in fact, that it seems unmanageable. It is amorphous, its boundaries so fungible that they seem to disappear. Sometimes it gets desperately, vexingly hard to nail down what queer theory *is*. This course, suitable for students who have a solid grounding in queer theory, uses the lens of queer to explore these frustratingly elusive liminal edges of the field. We also explore some neighboring states, like trans, disability, and postcolonial studies in the Dutch/ European context. We aim to understand not only the theoretical possibilities, but also the lived experience, of the populations under study.

Learning Outcomes

Upon completion of this course, students will be able to:

- Differentiate nuanced arguments about the intersection of queer theory with trans studies, postcolonial theory, disability studies, and critical race theory;
- Interpret cultural variations regarding gender, sexuality, and queer issues as they apply to the unique Dutch and Moroccan contexts;
- Synthesize key arguments in the debate about issues of agency in sex work and necropolitics;
- Formulate emerging theoretical and empirical orientations in the field of LGBTQI and queer theory.

Language of Instruction

This course is taught in English.

Course Schedule

Students will be provided a detailed course schedule during orientation on the program. Please be aware that topics and excursions may vary to take advantage of any emerging events, to accommodate changes in our lecturers' availability, and to respect any changes that would affect student safety. Students will be notified if this occurs.

WEEK ONE: QUEER THEORY IN THE NETHERLANDS

During this week, students are introduced to the key concepts of gender and sexuality into the context of the Netherlands. We begin many of the discussions we will be having throughout the semester, particularly the way the Dutch view themselves and their position as the gay capital of the world.

Sessions May Include:

- The Polder Model
- Introduction to Homonationalism
- Current Legislation

Required Readings:

Mak, G. (1994). *Amsterdam: A Brief Life of the City*. London: Vintage.

Roodsaz, R. & Jansen, W. (2019). Enabling sexual self-fashioning: embracing, rejecting and transgressing modernity among the Iranian Dutch. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 45(1), 1988-2005.

<https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2018.1435993>

Van der Veer, P. (2006). Pim Fortuyn, Theo van Gogh, and the politics of tolerance in the Netherlands. *Public Culture*, 18(1), 111-124. <https://doi.org/10.1215/08992363-18-1-111>.

Government of the Netherlands. (2018). Gender & LGBTI Equality Policy Plan 2018-2021. Putting principles into practice. Retrieved from:

<https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2018/06/01/gender--lgbti-equality-policy-plan-2018-2021>

WEEK TWO: QUEER THEORY TODAY

This week we explore the radical potential of queer theory with an early, formative discussion of the meaning of the word queer. We then proceed to read some of the most notable and influential books in the field. Because the field of queer studies has exploded so significantly since the 1990s, no student can be expected to have read everything. Each student will read one book and then present it to the class, so we all have many of the same tools in our belt.

Sessions May Include:

- Definitions of Queer
- Fundamentals of Queer Theory
- Simone Zeefuik Queers the Museum: Field assignment with activist and author of #decolonizethemuseum leads students on a tour of the Afterlives of Slavery exhibit at the Tropenmuseum (The Museum of the Tropics)

Required Readings:

Cohen, C. J. (1997). Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics? *GLQ*, 3, 437-465. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-3-4-437>

Kahan, B. (2019). *The Book of Minor Perverts: Sexology, Etiology, and the Emergences of Sexuality 1-45*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

One of the following:

- Leo Bersani, *Homos*;
- Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*;
- Lee Edleman, *No Future*;
- Roderick A. Ferguson, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*;
- Kevin Floyd, *The Reification of Desire*;
- Michel Foucault; *The History of Sexuality and Madness and Civilization*;
- Nancy Fraser, *Heterosexism, Misrecognition and Capitalism*;

- Elizabeth Freeman, *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories*;
- Rosemary Hennessy, *Profit and Pleasure*;
- Sharon Patricia Holland, *The Erotic Life of Racism*;
- Jose Esteban Munoz, *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics and Cruising Utopia*;
- Eve Sedgwick, *Epistemology of the Closet*;
- Jack Halberstam, *Female Masculinity*.

WEEK THREE: INTERSECTION OF QUEER AND POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

The Netherlands was a powerful colonial power with a massive, and extremely wealthy, exploitative empire. The country now struggles with questions of identity and self-conception as much as it does with the practice of equity. The next week are dedicated to understanding how the Dutch colonial past influences its current conceptions of sexuality and gender.

Sessions May Include:

- Indiscretions at the Sex/Culture Divide
- The Dutch Abroad
- Postcolonial/Queer
- Axmed Maxamed Dances with Pride: Field Assignment with the founder of Dance with Pride.

Required Readings:

Aydemir, M. (2011). Introduction: Indiscretions at the Sex/Culture Divide. *Indiscretions: At the Intersection of Queer and Postcolonial Theory*, 9-30.

<https://hdl.handle.net/11245/1.353535>

Chari, H. (2001). Colonial Fantasies and Postcolonial Identities: Elaboration of Postcolonial Masculinity and Homoerotic Desire. In: Hawley, J. C., ed., *Postcolonial, Queer. Theoretical Intersections*, 277-304. Albany: State of New York University Press.

McCormack, D. (2014). Introduction: Embodied Memories. *Queer Postcolonial Narratives and the Ethics of Witnessing*, 1-40. New York: Bloomsbury Academic.

Romanov, R. (2006). Introduction: The Postcolonial as Queer Space. *The Postcolonial Body in Queer Space and Time*, 3-37. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholar Publishing. <https://digitalcommons.uri.edu/dissertations/AAI3225329>

WEEK FOUR: TRANS

Judith Butler's opus, which is (probably correctly) considered the understructure of queer theory, first suggested that sex, id est: *the sexed body*, believed to be so clearly physically and concretely delineated and defined, was indeed socially constructed. It so clearly tracks that queer theory would be the ideal place to take up understanding of trans issues and the complexities of embodiment and identity.

Sessions May Include:

- Evil Twins
- Decolonizing Transgender
- Meeting with Sophie Schers: Sophie was the first out trans woman elected to public office in the Netherlands.

Required Readings:

Boellstorff, T., Cabral, M., Cárdenas, M., Cotten, T., Stanley, E. A., Young, K., Aizura,

- A. Z. (2014). Decolonizing Transgender: A Roundtable Discussion. *Transgender Studies Quarterly* 1(3), 419-439. <https://doi.org/10.1215/23289252-2685669>
- Halberstam, J. (2011). *The Queer Art of Failure*, 1-26, 87 – 122. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Stryker, S. (2004). Transgender Studies: Queer Theory's Evil Twin. *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and gay Studies* 10(2), 212-215. <https://doi.org/10.1215/10642684-10-2-212>

WEEKS FIVE AND SIX: GENDER AND SEXUALITY IN A MUSLIM CONTEXT

Students take a two-week excursion to Morocco to study gender and sexuality in a Muslim environment. With stops in Casablanca or Tangiers, Rabat, Essaouira, and Marrakech, we attend lectures, workshops, do participant and non-participant observation.

Sessions May Include:

- Lecture on Moroccan Art & Urban History of Tetouan, with Dr. Nadia Erzini
- Moroccan 101, with Mr. Nabil Akbli
- Gender Roles in Morocco, with Mrs. Farah Cherif
- Land Rights, with Dr. Rachid Touhtouh
- Democratization, with Dr. Boutaina Bensalem
- Homosexuality, with Dr. Abdessalam Dialmy
- Visit NIMAR, lecture on Moroccan-Dutch Historical Ties, Director & Cultural Attache Dutch Embassy in Rabat, with prof. Leon Buskens
- Field activity at Amal in Marrakesh
- Field activity at Marjane Cooperative
- Field activity at Association Insat
- Field activity at Solidarite Femminile

WEEK SEVEN: SEX WORK

Amsterdam, home to the famous Red Light District, is famous for its liberal laws on sex work. The truth is much more complex. There are issues with the problem of sex tourism, concerns about human trafficking, and a city government intent on replacing every working window in de Wallen with a Starbucks. We will debate the issues of agency versus coercion in class, hear from sex workers, take a tour of the Red Light District, and meet with the NGO people who believe they are fighting sex trafficking through their outreach.

Sessions May Include:

- Talk with a sex worker
- The Bridge2Hope
- Field assignment in the Red Light District
- Coercion versus Agency

Required Readings:

- Bernstein, E. (2019). *Brokered Subjects: Sex, Trafficking, and the Politics of Freedom*. Chicago: University of Michigan Press.
- Bettio, F., et al. (2017). "Sex Work and Trafficking: Moving beyond Dichotomies" *Feminist Economics* 23.3, 1-22.
- Blanchette, T. G. (2017). "Seeing Beyond Prostitution: Agency and the Organization of Sex Work" in *Selling Sex in the City: A Global History of Prostitution, 1600-2000s*. Leiden: Brill.

WEEK EIGHT: DISABILITY AND DISABLING

Here we queer ability. Able bodied people tend to assume a radical self-sufficiency in opposition to disabled persons. We will explore that assumption and problematize it using our queer theory.

Sessions May Include:

- Crip Theory
- Cliteracy
- Sunaura Taylor and the Examined Life

Required Readings:

Mintz, S. (2007) *Unruly Bodies: Life Writing by Women with Disabilities*.

Raleigh: University of North Carolina Press, pp. 183-210.

Kafer, A. (2013). Time for Disability Studies and a Future for Crips. *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, 25-46. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

WEEK NINE: BIOPOWER AND QUEER NECROPOLITICS

Biopower refers to controlling the personal and the political; Necropolitics takes the case a bit further, exploring how the social and political power dictates who may live. This “life” shouldn’t be understood as simply being a body still breathing. Rather, the life removed may be freedom, social life, political agency, and respect. This week we study the intersection of necropolitics, race, and queer.

Sessions May Include:

- Foucault and the *droit de glaive*
- Jasbir Puar
- Field assignment at the Vrolik Museum

Required Readings:

Haritaworn, J., et alia. (2014). *Queer Necropolitics*. New York: Routledge.

Puar, J. (2005). Queer Times, Queer Assemblages. *Social Text* 84-85.3-4, 1-22.

WEEK TEN: AFTER QUEER THEORY

Penney’s book, though not as controversial as he might like, still brings into question the entire project of using theory to “change the world,” and questions the continued usefulness of queer theory. As I wrote in the introduction, the boundaries of queer theory are hard to see? Have they disappeared entirely? Has queer, itself, become an outdated term?

Sessions May Include:

- The meeting of theory and activism
- The future of queer theory
- What is queer theory?

Required Reading:

Penney, J. (2014). *After Queer Theory: The Limits of Sexual Politics*. London: Pluto Press. <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt183p7nq>

WEEK ELEVEN - FOURTEEN: INDEPENDENT STUDY

Intellectual Salon Monday afternoons: We share how our queer theory is affecting and shaping, and being affected and shaped by, our research.

WEEK FIFTEEN: END ISP, FINAL PRESENTATIONS, WRAP-UP, RE-ENTRY AND EVALUATION

Evaluation and Grading Criteria

Journals (25%):

Students keep a journal for the semester.

- Part One: Students will make an entry for each of the required readings. that simply notes the thesis of the argument and lists any questions.
- Part Two: Students will be asked on a regular basis to reflect in writing – intellectually and analytically, as well as creatively – to class materials and the new worlds they encounter. This will usually take place in class.

Gender or Queer Theory Paper (25%):

Students write a 1500 – 2000 word essay on a topic of gender or sexuality in which they synthesize the intersection of queer theory with trans studies, postcolonial theory, disability studies, and critical race theory and formulate emerging theoretical and empirical orientations in the field of LGBTQI and queer theory. Details can be found in the assignment section on Moodle and will be discussed in class. This paper should feed into your final project's lit review.

Gender and Sexuality in Morocco (25%):

Students write a 1500-2000 word essay using field notes and observations from the excursion to Morocco in which they interpret key themes in sexuality and feminist theories, especially in the intersection of necropolitics, race, and queer, to the Moroccan and Dutch contexts;

Book Presentation (10%):

Students present on an important book in queer theory and present it to the class. Book presentation should demonstrate nuanced arguments about the intersection of queer theory with trans studies, postcolonial theory, disability studies or critical race theory. Details can be found in the assignment section on Moodle and will be discussed in class.

Participation (10%):

Participation includes:

- Attendance – promptness to class, and positive presence in class. Attendance is necessary but not sufficient
- Active listening – paying attention in class and during field excursions, asking appropriate questions, showing interest and enthusiasm, entertaining contradictory perspectives, taking notes
- Self-directed learning – reading the local paper and other materials to see the Dutch perspective on relevant issues, discussing issues with host families and others
- Involvement in-class discussions – either in small or large groups
- Group accountability during field excursions and classes
- Taking leadership roles – leading and guiding discussions in a productive direction

Assessment:

Journal	25%
Theory Paper	25%
Gender and Sexuality in Morocco Paper	25%
Book Review and Presentation	15%
Participation	10%

Grading Scale

94-100%	A	Excellent
90-93%	A-	
87-89%	B+	
84-86%	B	Above Average
80-83%	B-	
77-79%	C+	
74-76%	C	Average
70-73%	C-	
67-69%	D+	
64-66%	D	Below Average
below 64	F	Fail

Expectations and Policies

- Show up prepared. Be on time, have your readings completed and points in mind for discussion or clarification. Complying with these elements raises the level of class discussion for everyone.
- Have assignments completed on schedule, printed, and done accordingly to the specified requirements. This will help ensure that your assignments are returned in a timely manner.
- Ask questions in class. Engage the lecturer. These are often very busy professionals who are doing us an honor by coming to speak....
- Comply with academic integrity policies (no plagiarism or cheating, nothing unethical).
- Respect differences of opinion (classmates', lecturers, local constituents engaged with on the visits). You are not expected to agree with everything you hear, but you are expected to listen across difference and consider other perspectives with respect.

Please refer to the SIT Study Abroad handbook for policies on academic integrity, ethics, warning and probation, diversity and disability, sexual harassment and the academic appeals process. Also, refer to the specific information available in the Student Handbook given to you at Orientation.

Disability Services: Students with disabilities are encouraged to contact Disability Services at disabilityservices@sit.edu for information and support in facilitating an accessible educational experience. Additional information regarding SIT Disability Services, including a link to the online request form, can be found on the [Disability Services webpage](#).