

Queer of Color Critique

Spring 2023, GWS 446 Honors

Professor James McMaster

Class Time: 9:30-10:45am

Class Location: Sterling 2335

Email Address: jmcmaster@wisc.edu

Office Hours (Digital): Thurs., 11:00-12:00pm

Office Hours Sign-Up: <https://calendly.com/jmcmaster/office-hours>

Office Location: Sterling 3418

Course URL: <https://canvas.wisc.edu/courses/332053>

COURSE DESCRIPTION:

This honors seminar provides a deep dive into the intellectual formation known as queer of color critique. Whereas queer theory has a history of assuming whiteness as a default racial position, studies of race and ethnicity have a similar history of assuming a cisheteronormative stance. Queer of color critique emerges at the intersections of gender, sexuality, race, nation, diaspora, class, and ability to challenge these assumptions. Throughout the semester we will study the work of artists, activists, and scholars who have molded and made use of queer of color critique in pursuit of a better, more just, and more nourishing world. The first half of the semester will examine the foundations and lineages of queer of color theorizing and world-making. The latter half will explore new directions and developments in the field of queer of color critique. Issues examined along the way will include identity politics, sex, empire, abolition, anti-trans/queer violence, neoliberalism, migration, nightlife, and more.

COURSE ATTRIBUTES:

The course receives humanities, social science credit (Z) general education credit, it contributes to the GWS major and certificate program requirements, as well as the LGBTQ+ Studies certificate. The pre-requisites include sophomore standing, or consent of the instructor.

REQUIRED TEXTS:

All readings are available as PDF downloads on our CANVAS course website.

LEARNING OUTCOMES:

Students will...

...develop an understanding of the scholarly formation known as queer of color critique, its lineages and recent developments.

...practice applying a queer of color lens to everyday life, cultural production, and political struggles both within the United States and outside of it.

...cultivate an intersectional vision for racial, economic, gender, and sexual justice.

...examine the linkages between seemingly divergent issues and ideologies including those pertaining to neoliberal capitalism, race, sex, carcerality, gender, empire, war, and more.

...formulate original ideas, readings, and arguments associated with queer of color critique both in conversation with others and in writing.

COURSE REQUIREMENTS AND GRADING

PARTICIPATION AND ATTENDANCE (20% of Final Grade)

* Participation policy co-authored with Professor Cheryl Naruse of Tulane University.

Participation, in the spirit of interdependence, will be graded collectively rather than individually. Not only must all students participate actively and thoughtfully, but all students should also participate collaboratively and generously, taking care of each other and each other's ideas. You will all achieve the same grade and that grade will be based on the level of care, dynamism, and intellectual rigor we achieve together in each session. In this class, we will strive to have the conversation of our dreams: intellectually satisfying, sincere, and transformational. You should not be leaving the class feeling like the same person you were when you entered it. We are not here to learn what we already know.

Ways to make participation legible:

- 1) Perform Active Listening.
- 2) Be Engaged w/In-Class Activities
- 3) Cultivate a Culture of Exchange.
 - a) Direct comments to each other, not only to the instructor.
 - b) Cite your sources.
 - c) Affirm and uplift when appropriate.
 - d) Move up, move back.
 - e) Ask the questions you actually have.
 - f) Assume good intentions, be accountable to impact.
 - g) Forgive mistakes.
 - h) Land the plane.
- 4) Find Your Growing Edge.
- 5) Attend Class Sessions. Attendance is required. While there are no strict rules about how often students are allowed to miss class, the expectation is that students attend all course meetings to the best of their ability. Barring exceptional circumstances, frequent

absences from any student may affect the overall class participation grade of all students.

o If you find yourself experiencing symptoms related to COVID-19 DO NOT come to class, and please email the instructor as soon as possible to establish an accommodation plan.

Participation Evaluations: Students will complete a written evaluation of the class's collective participation at the midterm and final points of the semester. This 200-word assignment will make a case for the grade you feel the class as a whole deserves—you should state the number grade explicitly out of twenty points. Your argument should be built on concrete observations of class participation, not simply your own feelings. To this end, you are encouraged throughout the semester to take notes on class participation that can inform your essay. Evaluations themselves are graded on a pass/fail basis: failure to complete and submit your evaluation on time will result in a deduction of 2 points from your participation grade.

Midterm Evaluation: Due Date: 11:59pm, 3/2/2023

Final Evaluation: Due Date: 11:59pm, 4/27/2023

*Submit on Canvas.

RESPONSE POSTS (20% of Final Grade)

Between weeks 2 and 12, students will be required to submit a short, weekly post onto our course's CANVAS website responding to the prompts provided in the syllabus. The posts are designed to prepare students for in-class discussion and to guide student engagement with the course materials. Each post should be 200 words unless otherwise specified.

Each discussion post will be worth one point of the final grade and will be graded on a pass/fail basis. To earn a passing grade, posts must demonstrate a thoughtful, good-faith response to the prompt. Posts that appear hastily written, ill-considered, or incomplete will earn no credit.

Posts are due prior to the start of the session beneath which they are listed in the course schedule section of this syllabus.

*Submit weekly in CANVAS.

GROUP READING PRESENTATIONS (30% of Final Grade [15% Each])

Twice throughout the semester, in the last quarter of each class session, students will work in pairs to provide 15-minute presentations applying the day's readings to a cultural object, current event, or historical situation. Strong presentations will summarize relevant findings from the reading, and then extend those findings through a critical engagement with the chosen object, event, or situation. Presentations should conclude with a one or two discussion questions that move the class into generative, dynamic discussion for the last five minutes of class. Each student should have an equal role in the presentation. Students are encouraged to bring presentation ideas to office hours in advance of their scheduled presentation date.

Presentations will be graded based on how well groups understand and activate course materials.

FINAL PAPER ABSTRACT (5% of Final Grade)

Prior to the final due date, students will again be required to submit a proposal for their paper in the form of an abstract. Abstracts should be 250 words. They should specify the paper topic (ie., the specific cultural object or primary source that will be analyzed in the paper), and should also put forth an anticipated thesis statement. Abstracts should be accompanied by a list of the course texts the student anticipates citing in the final paper. Abstracts will be graded based on the clarity and thoughtfulness of the proposed paper idea, the demonstrated understanding of course materials, and on the strength of the writing.

Due Date: 11:59pm, 3/9/23

*Submit in CANVAS.

FINAL PAPER (25% of Final Grade)

At the conclusion of the course students will submit an eight-page final paper. These papers must bring queer of color critique to bear on a primary source (cultural object [a film, a novel, a play, etc.]; a political speech, a government document, etc.) through an original close reading. These papers should engage meaningfully with at least four of the texts assigned in class. As with the midterm, these are thesis papers. As such, each paper should adopt and argue a clear point of view. Paper grades will be based on the clarity and execution of their arguments, on their demonstrated understanding of course materials, and on the strength of the writing. Final papers should be of a quality that demonstrates growth with respect to feedback received on midterm papers.

Due Date: 11:59pm, 5/5/23

*Submit in CANVAS.

Grade Totals

Final Grade Scale

Participation and Attendance: 25%	92.5-100% = A
Participation Assessment: 5%	87.5-92.4% = AB
Response Posts: 15%	82.5-87.4% = B
Group Reading Presentations: 30%	77.5-82.4% = BC
Final Abstract: 5%	59.5-69.4% = D
Final Paper: 30%	59.4% and below = F

COURSE POLICIES:

Email: Assume that I will respond to your e-mail within 48 hours. If I have not responded within that amount of time, feel free to e-mail me again. I do not respond to emails during weekends or breaks. Plan accordingly.

Honesty: Please read the university policy on academic integrity (<https://www.students.wisc.edu/doso/academic-integrity/>). All information borrowed from print sources or the web must be clearly identified and properly credited. Any instance of plagiarism or cheating on written assignments will result in an “F” grade for the assignment and the course.

Extensions: All assignments are due when the syllabus says they are due. However, I recognize that life sometimes requires students to ask for extensions. In these cases, please communicate your situation to me as soon as possible so that I might do my best to accommodate your needs. Not all circumstances and requests can be accommodated. Work that is not submitted on time without explanation is subject to grade penalties at the instructor’s discretion.

Accommodations: Any student who feels that they may need special accommodation due to a disability should contact the McBurney Disability Resource Center (<http://www.mcburney.wisc.edu/>) at 608-263-2741 (phone); 263-6393 (TTY); 263-2998 (FAX); FrontDesk@mcb.wisc.edu to ensure that accommodations are implemented in a timely fashion.

Class Conduct: Racism, misogyny, heterosexism, ableism, transmisogyny, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Semitism, classism and other forms of oppressive speech or behavior will not be tolerated. We seek to understand these systems, not to reproduce them.

READING LIST:

Week 1: Introductions

1/24: Read the syllabus.

1/26: Kyla Wazana Tompkins, “Some Notes on How to Ask a Good Question About Theory.”

Barbara Christian, “The Race for Theory.”

Week 2: Black and Women of Color Feminist Foundations

NO CLASS THIS WEEK – Asynchronous Assignment

The Combahee River Collective Statement.

Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference."

Ellie Hernández, "Re-Thinking Margins and Borders: An Interview with Gloria Anzaldúa."

Merle Woo, "Letter to Ma."

Cherrie Moraga, "Theory-in-the-Flesh."

bell hooks, "Theory as Liberatory Practice."

Discussion Post 1: What do Black and women of color feminisms teach us about the place of theory within intersectional, anti-capitalist movements for justice?

Week 3: Toward a Queer of Color Critique I

2/7: Cathy Cohen, "Punks, Bulldaggers, and Welfare Queens: The Radical Potential of Queer Politics."

2/9: Roderick Ferguson, "Introduction: Queer of Color Critique, Historical Materialism, and Canonical Sociology," *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*.

Discussion Post 2: To the best of your ability, explain Ferguson's approach to queer of color critique.

Week 4: Toward a Queer of Color Critique II

2/14: José Esteban Muñoz, "Introduction: Performing Disidentifications," *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics*.

Discussion Post 3: To the best of your ability, explain what Muñoz means by "disidentification." Briefly describe an experience of disidentification that you have had in your life.

2/16: E. Patrick Johnson, "'Quare' studies, or (almost) everything I know about queer studies I learned from my grandmother."

Week 5: Toward a Trans of Color Critique

2/21: Jules Gill-Peterson, "Trans of Color Critique before Transsexuality."

2/23: C. Riley Snorton and Jin Haritaworn, "Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death, and the Trans of Color Afterlife."

Discussion Post 4: How, according to Snorton and Haritaworn, is trans inclusion linked to trans death?

Week 6: Toward a Crip of Color Critique

2/28: Jina B. Kim, "Crippling the Welfare Queen: The Radical Potential of Disability Politics."

Discussion Post 5: What differences and similarities can you identify between queer of color critique and crip of color critique as Kim articulates it?

3/2: Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha, "Preface: Writing (With) A Movement From Bed," "Care Webs: Experiments in Creating Collective Access," and "Two or Three Things I Know for Sure About Femme Suicide: A Love Letter," *Care Work: Dreaming Disability Justice*.

***Midterm Participation Evaluations Due.**

Week 7: Queer of Color Critique's Special Issues

3/7: David L. Eng and Jasbir K. Puar, "Introduction: Left of Queer."

Recommended: David L. Eng, Jack Halberstam, and José Esteban Muñoz, "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?"

Discussion Post 6: To the best of your ability, explain what Eng and Puar mean by "objectless critique."

3/9: Dana Luciano and Mel Y. Chen, "Introduction: Has the Queer Ever Been Human?"

***Final Paper Abstract Due.**

Week 8: Spring Break!

No class! Go rest and live!

Week 9: The City at Night.

3/21: Bobby Benedicto, "Automobility and the Gay Cityscape," *Under Bright Lights: Gay Manila and the Global Scene*.

3/23: Kemi Adeyemi, "Slow 'Mo and the Pace of Black Queer Life," *Feels Right: Black Queer Women and the Politics of Partying in Chicago*.

Discussion Post 7: What is similar and what is different about the way Benedicto writes about Manila and the way Adeyemi writes about Chicago? What is at stake in those similarities and differences?

Week 10: Sex.

3/28: Juana Maria Rodriguez, "Introduction," *Sexual Futures, Queer Gestures, and Other Latina Longings*.

3/30: Amber Musser, "Introduction: Brown Jouissance and Inhabitations of the Pornotrope," *Sensual Excess: Queer Femininity and Brown Jouissance*.

Discussion Post 8: Identify a passage in the Rodriguez or Musser that has shifted the way you think about sex and sexuality. Write about the difference it has made to your thinking.

Week 11: Indigeneity and Decolonization.

4/4: Jodi Byrd, "What's Normative Got to Do with It?: Toward Indigenous Queer Relationality."

Discussion Post 9: In your own words, explain the following line from the reading: "If there is anything for the queer to offer Indigenous studies, I want to suggest, it may be found in the quality of (im)materiality of the Indigenous body as the ground through which belonging and being are rendered, critiqued, and transformed" (Byrd 108).

4/6: Qwo-Li Driskill, "Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances Between Native and Queer Studies."

Week 12: Diasporic Aesthetics.

4/11: Gayatri Gopinath, "Diaspora, Indigeneity, Queer Critique," *Unruly Visions: The Aesthetic Practices of Queer Diaspora*.

Discussion Post 10: In your own words, explain the relationship Gopinath is trying to articulate between diaspora, Indigeneity, and queerness.

4/13: Vivian Huang, "Introduction: Inscrutable Surfacing," *Surface Relations: Queer Forms of Asian American Inscrutability*.

Week 13: Empire and Anti-Imperialism

4/18: Jasbir Puar, "Introduction: Homonationalism and Biopolitics," *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*.

4/20: Ronak Kapadia, "Palestine(s) in the Sky: Visionary Aesthetics and Queer Cosmic Utopias from the Frontiers of US Empire," *Insurgent Aesthetics: Security and the Queer Life of the Forever War*.

Week 14: Carcerality and Abolition

4/25: Marquis Bey and Jesse A. Goldberg, "Queer as in Abolition Now!"

Ren-Yo Hwang, "Deviant Care for Deviant Futures: QTBIPOC Radical Relationalism as Mutual Aid against Carceral Care."

4/27: Morgan Bassichis, Alexander Lee, and Dean Spade, "Building an Abolitionist Trans and Queer Movement with Everything We've Got."

***Final Participation Evaluations Due.**

Week 15: The End and The Future

5/2: José Esteban Muñoz, "Introduction: Feeling Utopia" *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*.

Joshua Chambers-Letson, "Preface: The Manifesto of a Communist Party," *After the Party: A Manifesto for Queer of Color Life*.

5/4: In-class Review: What is queer of color critique? How has it changed us?

***Final Paper Due: 11:59pm, May 5, 2023.**