ANT 391 SEXUALITY AND CULTURE
Instructor: Sofian Merabet

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Office Hours in EPS 1.202: W 2:00 – 4:00 p.m. or by appointment

Unique #: 30342 Time: Thursday 4:00 PM-7:00 PM Location: MEZ 1.118

This graduate seminar deals with the cultural analysis of sexuality. Its aim is to critically evaluate formative concepts and theories that have been subject to debates within Anthropology, History, Philosophy, and Gender Studies. Through the reading of a variety of texts by different authors such as the Marquis de Sade, Freud, Malinowski, Foucault, Butler, and others, we will explore how terms like "women" and “men,” “femininity” and “masculinity,” as well as “homosexuality” and “heterosexuality” have structured people's experiences and their perceptions of sexuality at large and the central position it occupies within culture. One of the basic themes of the material for this course concerns the extent to which both realities and the ways in which they are perceived are socio-cultural constructs that are subject to constant change and, therefore, need historical contextualization.

**Required Texts:** [ordered at the University Coop, www.universitycoop.com, 2246 Guadalupe Street, Austin, (512) 476-7211]

- Butler, Judith *Gender Trouble*, Routledge, 1990
Course Requirements for Registered Students:

The class relies on the intellectual commitment and active participation of all students. It will be run primarily as discussions within a seminar format. In order for the course to be effective, all students must have the reading assignments completed and ready for in-depth discussion for each class. Regular attendance is required. Attendance in class, however, does not constitute participation. You must come to class having carefully read all materials and be prepared to discuss, question, and argue about issues raised in the readings. It will be beneficial for you to take excerpts/notes on any material that you find enlightening, controversial, or objectionable. You should also take notes in class on themes, key terms, and debates we tackle. These note-taking strategies will be crucial when you write your weekly response papers. In short:

1) Do all assigned readings (while taking excerpts/notes!) by the date indicated on the syllabus and participate actively in the general class discussion.
2) Regular two to three 15-minute presentations on the weekly readings to be assigned to students. They are intended to launch the general seminar discussions.
3) Three-page critical response papers covering the assigned readings to be sent on Wednesday evenings (the day before class) via email/Blackboard to all members of the seminar.
The writing assignments will be graded and are designed to develop critical reading, analytical, and writing skills. Generally, you should start your weekly response papers by introducing the author and the general theme(s) of the work, then focus on one or two central aspects that strike you as being essential in supporting the author’s argument. Based on that introduction, you are asked to engage in a constructive critique of the text.

The goal of the writing assignments is two-fold: one, identify and explain the argument(s) that the author is making, and two, provide your own take on that argument. Begin with a short summary of the work and then focus on the author’s argument(s). Try to be concise in all parts of your analysis. An outline can help to remain focused on your analysis and avoid summary or irrelevant description. Following is a sample outline for your assignment:

I. Introduction (includes the author’s and your argument[s])
II. Short summary of the text (focus on one or two central aspects of the work)
III. Development and substantiation of your critique

Evaluation criteria include: critical and integrative analysis of texts, clarity of thought, ability to synthesize readings and, occasionally, class discussions into your own argument, and ability to formulate a theoretical grounding for it.

**Grading Procedure:**

- Weekly 3-page critical response papers: 80%.
- Presentations: 10%.
- Regular attendance/participation: 10%.

*Please note that the instructor reserves the right to make changes in the syllabus when necessary to meet learning objectives.*

**Reading Schedule:** (this schedule is tentative and subject to possible revision)

**Week 1: Sexuality and Culture**

- Thursday, August 26th  
  Introduction to the seminar
Week 2: The “Repressive Hypothesis”: Sexuality as an analytics of power related to the emergence of a science of sexuality in the Western world

- Thursday, September 2nd

Week 3: The role of Sex in Greek and Roman Antiquity

- Thursday, September 9th

Week 4: Sexual pleasure and its Discontents in Late Antiquity

- Thursday, September 16th

Week 5: The drama of “Libertinage”: Between theory, practice, and the play of language

- Thursday, September 23rd

Week 6: “Castration anxiety,” the “Oedipus complex,” “penis envy,” and “perversion

- Thursday, September 30th

Week 7: Countering the universality of the Freudian “Oedipus complex”

- Thursday, October 7th

Week 8: The crisis of homo/heterosexual definition

- Thursday, October 14th
Week 9: “Gender Performativity” between “Queer Theory” and “Post-modern/post-structural Feminism”

- **Thursday, October 21st**

Week 10: The Paradigmatic form of “Symbolic Violence”

- **Thursday, October 28th**

Week 11: The importance of the transgender(ed) body

- **Thursday, November 4th**
  - Halberstam, Judith, *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*, NYU Press, 2005

Week 12: A queer and sex-positive approach to the study of trauma

- **Thursday, November 11th**

Week 13: Everyday life and its affective dimensions *(Class taught by Prof. K. Stewart)*

- **Thursday, November 18th**

Week 14: Thanksgiving

- **Thursday, November 25th**
  - No Class!

Week 15: The construction and sentimental fantasy of an “intimate (female) public”

- **Thursday, December 2nd**
Emergency Evacuation Policy:

Occupants of buildings on The University of Texas at Austin campus are required to evacuate buildings when a fire alarm is activated. Alarm activation or announcement requires exiting and assembling outside.

Familiarize yourself with all exit doors of each classroom and building you may occupy. Remember that the nearest exit door may not be the one you used when entering the building.

Students requiring assistance in evacuation shall inform their instructor in writing during the first week of class.

In the event of an evacuation, follow the instruction of faculty or class instructors.

Do not re-enter a building unless given instructions by the following: Austin Fire Department, The University of Texas at Austin Police Department, or Fire Prevention Services office.

Behavior Concerns Advice Line/BCAL: 232-5050

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