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LIT 420.01: Critical Theory: Gender Studies

Casey Charles

University of Montana, Missoula

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LIT 420.01 CRITICAL THEORY: GENDER STUDIES AND THE NEW AUTOTHEORY

SPRING, 2018

CRN 35601

TTH 2:00-3:20, JRH 205

CASEY CHARLES

casey.charles@mso.umt.edu

Office Hours: Tuesday 12-1, Friday 12-2, and by appointment

Office: 216 LA; phone 243-2762

Students without prerequisites may be admitted with consent of the instructor.

Description:

This course explores theories of emotional affect and intersectionality in relation to gender, identity, and sexuality by examining recent works that mix theory and creativity—through the personal essay and poetry. The notion that ideas can find their expostulation in reference to experience is not necessarily a novel one, but these texts, by exploring gender and sexuality through combining the personal, political, and theoretical in various genres that mix poetry and prose, open up new possibilities of not only challenging the great divide between theory and aesthetic production, but also exploring the boundaries of political and social expression itself.

The course is roughly divided into four segments. The first part reviews and expands upon accepted notions of gender and sexuality studies (Butler), moving from there in to questions of current permutations of feminist thought (Solnit, Boyer, Nelson). The second part of the course treats affect theory (Ahmed, Banu, Riley), while the third section runs headlong into queer theory through a discussion of psychoanalysis and its discontents (Bersani and Edelman) and a look at the way that theory finds its way into personal essay (Blanchfield) and poetry (Smith). Finally, Halberstam and Preciado introduces the world of trans* subjectivity.

The trying but perhaps rewarding part of the course resides in the admixture of personal, political, and theoretical in a set or readings that ranges from what we might call pure theory (Butler, Ahmed, and Edelman) to poetry (Banu and Smith) to the personal essay as autotheory (Nelson and Blanchfield). My hunch is that critical gender studies lends itself to generic disruptions in so far as it questions the fixity of categorical boundaries in writing as well as identity studies.

Required Texts:¹

- Solnit, *Mother of All Questions*
- Boyer, *Garments Against Women*
- Nelson, *Argonauts*
- Banu Kapil, *Banu in Banlieue*
- Blanchfield, *Proxies*
- Smith, *Don't Call Us Dead*
- Halberstam, *Trans**
- Preciado, *Testo Junkie*

Posted Essays on Moodle:

- Butler, *Undoing Gender* (selections)
- Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (selections)
- Denise Riley, selected essays
- Edelman, "The Future is Kids Stuff" (essay on moodle)

Work:

- Weekly quizzes are open-book but time-sensitive. Sometimes we will do threads instead, sometimes write short in-class essays. **(33%)**
- Three Response Papers (3-5 pages each) **(33%)**
- A final essay (12-15 pages) which includes a rough draft and short report to the class **(33%)**
- Attendance and participation: students are expected to come to class ready to ask and answer questions. More than three unexcused absences during the semester may result in a failing grade. Excellent participation will allow students with a grade point average on the cusp to have their grade rounded upward.

Ground Rules:

- I do not accept late papers unless the student contacts me with a reasonable excuse before the beginning of the class on the day the paper is due.

¹ Books are available at Shakespeare and Company, 103 South 3rd West, Missoula. Open M-F 10-6, SatSun 10-5.

- There are no make-up quizzes.
- Students must attend at least one conference with the teacher during the semester.
- Students with disabilities will be accommodated.
- Plagiarism (the stealing of another's words or ideas) will result in a recommendation of expulsion from the university. See the Student Conduct Code.
- <http://www.umt.edu/umallies> This classroom is a safe space for diverse populations and adheres to the principles of nondiscrimination based on ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation as set forth by UM Allies.

Outcomes:

- Acquisition of skills in analyzing literature through close reading informed by the critical tradition of gender studies
- Familiarity with the vocabulary and discourse of feminism, gender studies, and queer theory
- Production of writing that demonstrates the ability to create coherent arguments about literature through the application of critical theory to text

For important dates and deadlines related to classes, visit the Registrar's page:
<http://www.umt.edu/registrar/calendar.php>

SCHEDULE (subject to change)

Tuesday, January 23	Introduction
Thursday, January 25	Gender Introduction (moodle)
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Tuesday, January 30	Butler, Undoing Gender (selections on moodle)
Thursday, February 1	Butler, Undoing
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Tuesday, February 6	Solnit, Mother
Thursday, February 8	Solnit, Mother
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Tuesday, February 13	Boyer, Garments
Thursday, February 15	Nelson, Argonauts
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Tuesday, February 20	Nelson, Argonauts
Thursday, February 22	Nelson, Argonauts
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RESPONSE	
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Tuesday, February 27	Ban Kapil, Ban in Banlieue

Thursday, March 1

Ban, Ban

Tuesday, March 6

Sara Ahmed, selections (moodle)

Thursday, March 8

Ahmed, selections

Tuesday, March 13

Denise Riley, essays (moodle)

Thursday, March 15

Riley, essays

Tuesday, March 20

Bersani and Phillips, Intimacies

RESPONSE

Thursday, March 22

Bersani and Phillips, Intimacies

SPRING BREAK MARCH 26-MARCH 30

Tuesday, April 3

Blanchfield, Proxies

Thursday, April 5

Blanchfield, Proxies

Tuesday, April 10

Edelman, Kids Stuff (essay on moodle)

Thursday, April 12

Smith, Don't Call Us Dead

Tuesday, April 17

Smith, Don't Call Us Dead

Thursday, April 19

Halberstam, Trans*

RESPONSE PAPER

Tuesday, April 24

Halberstam, Trans*

Thursday, April 26

Preciado, Testo

ROUGH DRAFT OF FINAL ESSAY

Tuesday, May 1

Preciado, Testo

REPORTS ON FINAL PAPERS

Thursday, May 3

Preciado, Testo

Finals Week May 7-12

Tuesday May 8 FINAL ESSAY Due NOO