



Queer Theory, Visual Culture

Fall 2021

COURSE SYLLABUS

Instructor: Dr. Amanda Cachia, Ph.D.

Office hours:

acachia@otis.edu

This syllabus is intended to give students guidance in what may be covered during the semester and will be followed as closely as possible. However, the instructor reserves the right to modify, supplement and make changes as course needs arise.

Course Overview:

This course introduces key concepts in queer, queer of color, trans, and crip theory through visual practices and tactics that challenge the terms of visibility and what and how we see across art and media. The mobilization of the very words “queer” and “crip” negotiate shame and stigma by occupying and reworking terms of injury and often signal a certain “bad attitude.” In its critical questioning of assumptions regarding norms, queer embraces deviance and indeterminacy. In its focus on performance and discourse production, the practice of queering also attends to the intersectional analysis of sexuality, that is, the imbrication of questions of desire and identification with embodiment, gender, class, ability, and race. Queering is an activity of questioning, a critical and creative practice of turning taken-for-granted tropes that makes strange the assumed “naturalness” of binary systems. To queer is to affect the ethical and political activation of speculative theorizing and aesthetics. The work of queering also involves a self-critical approach to one’s own discursive and visual production. Throughout the course, we will be forging links between queer theorization about visual culture, interventions in the archive, and critical and creative tactics of queeri.

Program Learning Outcomes:

- Communicate ideas in a coherent, logical, and compelling way for different purposes and audiences.
- Identify issues clearly, synthesize and contextualize relevant sources, and make connections across experiences and disciplinary perspectives to create well-reasoned and imaginative approaches to issues, problems, and challenges.
- Develop skills to locate, evaluate, and use information resources from both traditional and emerging technologies appropriately effectively and ethically.
- Develop collaborative skills to construct knowledge, negotiate effective outcomes, and generate new insights.
- Forge interdisciplinary connections among the liberal arts and sciences, studio, and community.
- Develop cultural awareness in a global context.

Course Learning Outcomes:

1. To identify a framework and language for how queer theory practices fit into the discourse of visual culture within a social justice lens.
2. To understand how queer theory has impacted visual culture within the broader context of 20th century social, cultural and political history, particularly colonization and decolonizing practices.
3. To develop your own framework for understanding the relevance and meaning of queer theory in visual culture within contemporary society.

Required Texts and Materials:

All required readings, videos and other materials will be provided as PDFs, linked and available for downloading in the Nest weekly modules.

Coursework Details:

The grade for this course will be calculated as follows

Project	Percentage of Final Grade	Details
Weekly Reading Responses	40% total; 4 points each x 10	There will be a total of 10 reading responses. Reading response prompts will be posted as homework. These must be completed in lieu of reduced time together on Zoom. Your reading responses are tools for working through the material and thinking about how the material can relate (or not) to your own scholarly, artistic, and social justice interests. They can be critical, open-ended, and/or personal. What I am looking for is an earnest engagement with the work. Make sure that your papers engage with all of the readings assigned, although more emphasis on one is acceptable.
Essays	20% total; 10 points for each x 2	There will be a total of 2 essays. Minimum word count is 1000 words (not including annotations). Each essay must take a position to develop an argument. In each of these essays, your position is supported by two quality research sources. These sources must be annotated -- please see below. Your conclusion includes some critical reflection related to issues of queer theory in visual culture.
Annotated Bibliography for 2 Essays	10% total; 5 points for each x 2	Annotated Bibliography with each of the above Essays; minimum 2 academic sources.
Final Essay & Presentation	20%; 20 points	The Signature Assignment for this course consists of a Final Essay (8 pages plus images and annotated bibliography), where you select a

Project	Percentage of Final Grade	Details
(Signature Assignment)		contemporary queer artist or several artists of your choice and write a paper on their work and their contributions to visual culture. You will also deliver and submit a 10 minute presentation on your paper in the final 2 weeks of class.
Participation	10%	Points can be earned each week in two ways. 1) Engaged participation in Zoom class discussions; 2) Participation in the online discussion boards, with a minimum of 2 responses to other posts.

Assignment Criteria

The major assignments for this course are:

- 40 points: 10 reading responses
- 20 points: 2 essays (1000 words each)
- 10 points: Annotated Bibliography with each of 2 essays above; a minimum of 2 academic sources
- 20 points: Final Essay (8 pages plus images and Annotated Bibliography) & Class Presentation
- 10 points: Participation in Zoom meetings and threaded class discussion

Total points for semester: 100

Grade Scale

Grade Percentage

A	95 - 100%
A-	90 - 94%
B+	86 - 89%
B	82 - 85%
B-	78 - 81%
C+	74 - 77%
C	70 - 73%
C-	67 - 69%
D	60 - 66%
F	0 - 59%

All work will be graded on line within 7-10 days of submission -- that time frame allows for tech glitches that always happen even in a perfect world.

Due Dates

All work is due by the beginning of the specified class meeting; hard deadlines are clearly specified in the Week by Week schedule found in this syllabus.

Late Work

Because we are in an unprecedented COVID situation that has made life very stressful for teachers and students alike, I will accept late work for one week after the due date with no penalty.

Art History Tutoring

Art History tutoring will help students with:

- Reading Comprehension
- Explanation of art terms and concepts
- Writing (including reading responses and essays)
- Exam prep

The following Art History faculty will be available via Zoom sessions to assist you with our class.

For Hours Contact

Schedule an SLC tutor Appointment.

The TLC or jmvenurini@otis.edu will instruct you on scheduling digital tutoring during our COVID closed campus requirements.

Otis College Policies

Interim Course Attendance Fall 2021

Attendance is critical to learning and academic success. Consistent attendance by all students benefits everyone and allows class communities to learn in an efficient and productive manner without disruption. Nonetheless, we acknowledge that there are times when a student must miss a class meeting. At Otis College of Art and Design, students will take responsibility for their absences and for meeting assignment requirements and deadlines. Student responsibility and proactivity are valued at Otis College of Art and Design.

Students are not expected or required to disclose reasons for their absences.

Each instructor will indicate the accepted timeframe for submitting coursework missed due to an absence on the course syllabus. **However, some class meetings or experiences cannot be made up (“excused”), therefore an absence on those dates is automatically recorded as “unexcused.”** The instructor determines which and how many class meetings or experiences cannot be made up (“excused”) and indicates them on the course schedule.

All Foundation Level courses are considered required.

There are no "excused" absences.

Consequences of “Unexcused” Absences:

During the fall and spring semesters, students must not incur more than:

- 3 “unexcused” absences in a course that meets once per week

After a student reaches the maximum number of “unexcused” absences, as quantified above, the student will receive a **failing grade** for the course.

Academic Alerts:

After 1 “unexcused” absences, an academic alert will be submitted by the course instructor.

After 2 "unexcused" absences, an academic alert will be submitted by the course instructor.

Arriving Late or Leaving Early:

A “tardy” is arriving late for class or leaving class early.

- Any student arriving over 10 minutes late to Zoom class or leaving class early is considered tardy.
- 4 tardies will equal 1 "unexcused" absence.
- Entering class 40 minutes late or leaving 40 minutes early will be counted as an "unexcused" absence.

Persistent tardies (more than 4) are disruptive to the class and drastically compromise your success in the course.

Behavioral Expectations

All Otis students are expected to assist in maintaining an environment that supports effective teaching and learning, and a culture of civility and respect for others. Therefore, any behavior that disrupts or interferes with the functioning of a classroom, studio, or college-sponsored off-campus venue may result in students being asked to leave the class, and where warranted, being referred for possible discipline according to the Otis Code of Conduct (as outlined in the current Student Handbook). The consequences of disruptive behavior may also affect a student's grade.

Hours for Course Completion

One unit generates three hours of coursework:

3 unit course = 3 hour class, 6 hours of homework each week

Disability Accommodations

If you are a student with documented disability services (physical, learning, or psychological) requiring reasonable academic accommodations, you must contact Dr. Carol Branch at (310) 826-2554 before you need any accommodations. Retroactive accommodations are not provided, so please be sure to make your request early in the semester. All discussions will remain confidential.

For more information, please visit the [Disability Services website](#)

Student Health and Wellness Center

The [Student Health and Wellness Center](#) (SHWC) is available for all currently enrolled students if any medical or counseling need should arise. Medical services include acute, chronic and preventive care which includes sick visits, physical exams, lab work, and immunizations.

Therapeutic counseling services are offered Free and Confidential to all enrolled students. Common topics include generalized anxiety, depression, social anxiety, adjustment, and relationship concerns. When a student is in significant emotional distress or experiencing a crisis, we also have same-day appointments available. The SHWC is located on the first floor of Ahmanson, room 107; hours of operation are 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday. Appointments can be made in person or by calling (310) 846-5738. In a life-threatening emergency, students should call 9-1-1 and Campus Safety and Security: (310) 665-6965.

*As a reminder, the Student Health and Wellness Center does not provide excuse notes for missing class.

SLC Tutoring for Contemporary Art Survey

The Student Learning Center (SLC) seeks to provide Otis' diverse student population with the support tools they need in order to grow as individuals, scholars, and artists. Support is offered by peer writing consultants and tutors to assist students in improving their academic performance.

- [Schedule a tutor](#)
- Location: Library, room 100 E
- SLC Coordinator: Ryan Khoo (rkhoo@otis.edu)

Preferred Name/Pronoun Policy

Preferred Name Policy

Otis College of Art and Design is committed to fostering an inclusive campus that values self-expression and respect for the variety of communities it serves. The College recognizes that many students, faculty and staff choose to use a preferred first name rather than a legal name whenever a legal name is not absolutely necessary, limited by technology, or required by law. At Otis College, students may request a preferred first name by submitting a [Preferred First Name Request Form](#); faculty and staff may request use of a preferred first name by contacting Human Resources.

Otis College reserves the right to remove or deny the preferred first name if used inappropriately. This includes, but is not limited to, names using foul or inappropriate language, names submitted to avoid a legal obligation, and names used to create misrepresentation. Each individual may request one preferred first name change during each twelve month period.

Read the [full policy](#).

Plagiarism

If you have to ask: "should I acknowledge where this information came from?" ... then you probably should!

Plagiarism Statement:

Plagiarism occurs when a person deliberately uses another person's concepts, language, images, music, or other original (not common knowledge) material without acknowledging the source and/or making substantial modifications. While referencing or appropriating may be part of a studio or Liberal Arts and Sciences assignment, it is the student's ethical responsibility to acknowledge and/or modify the original material.

Specific examples of plagiarism include:

- Submitting someone else's work in whole or part (including copying directly from a source without documentation and/or alteration, or turning in studio work that is not your own).
- Having someone else produce, revise, or substantially alter all or part of a written paper or studio assignment.
- Cutting and pasting any textual or image-based work from the internet without proper documentation or clarification of sources.
- Failure to cite sources. Proper citations in MLA style and a Works Cited page must accompany all papers. You can find citation information through the [Library website](#).

- Using the writing, editing, or creative services of another person who quantitatively and/or qualitatively revises the paper and/or studio work significantly. An editor often fixes the paper without the writer learning how to do it him/herself. Sometimes the editor changes so much of the paper that it is no longer the student writer's work and thus plagiarized. A trained tutor helps the writer to learn how to revise the papers and eventually not need the tutor's assistance.

Instances of alleged plagiarism are reported to the **Academic Integrity Committee** for review. For a complete description of the Academic Integrity Committee process, please refer to the [Academic Misconduct Complaint Form](#)

CLASS SCHEDULE

Week 1: Introduction: Queer Theory as Praxis, Queer Theory as Performative

Introduce Course + Read Warner + Leonard

Discuss Judith Butler + Emily Colucci review of New Museum's exhibition, "Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon"

Required Reading:

1. Michael Warner, "Queer and Then," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (January 1, 2012), <https://www.chronicle.com/article/QueerThen-/130161>
2. Zoe Leonard, "I want a president..." 1992, <https://iwantapresident.wordpress.com/i-want-a-president-zoe-leonard-1992/>
3. Emily Colucci, "This Exhibition Avoids Turning Identity Into Easily Digestible Clickbait: 'Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon,'" *Filthy Dreams*, blogpost, October 18, 2017, <https://filthydreams.org/2017/10/18/this-exhibition-avoids-turning-identity-into-easily-digestible-clickbait-trigger-gender-as-a-tool-and-a-weapon/>
4. Judith Butler, Excerpts from "Introduction" to *Bodies that Matter*, in *The Gender/Sexuality Reader: Culture, History, Political Economy*, ed. Roger N. Lancaster & Micaela di Leonardo (New York: Routledge, 1997), 533-42.

Week 2: What is the praxis of the "queer" in queer theory now?

Discuss Lorde + Sedgwick

Discuss Eng, Halberstam, & Muñoz

Required Reading:

1. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House" (1979) in *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, eds. Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa (New York: Kitchen Table Press, 1981), 94-101.
2. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Introduction: Axiomatic," in *The Epistemology of the Closet* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), 1-63.
3. David L. Eng, Judith Halberstam, and José Muñoz, "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now: Introduction," *Social Text* 85 (Fall-Winter 2005).

Week 3: Being, Doing and Being Done: Performative & Deformative

Discuss Sedgwick + Butler + fierce pussy and Discuss Theory-in-Practice Project #1
Project Day

Required Reading:

1. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, "Queer Performativity: Henry James's The Art of the Novel," *GLQ* 1 (1993): 1-16.
2. Judith Butler, "Critically Queer," *GLQ* 1 (1993): 17-32.
3. fierce pussy, "Interview," 2009, <http://fiercepussy.org/www.fiercepussy.org/Interview.html>

Week 4: Queer Nations, Homonationalism, Queer Worldmaking

Discuss Berlant & Freeman and Morgensen

Discuss Gopinath and Muñoz

Required Reading:

1. Lauren Berlant and Elizabeth Freeman, "Queer Nationality," in *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory*, ed. Michael Warner (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 193-229.
2. Scott Lauria Morgensen, "Settler Homonationalism: Theorizing Settler Colonialism within Queer Modernities," *GLQ* 16 (2010): 105-31.
3. José Esteban Muñoz, "Introduction: Feeling Utopia," in *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity* (New York: NYU Press, 2013), 1-18.

Week 5: Trans Theory, Trans Mattering

Discuss Stone, Preciado & Hayward

Cassils

Required Reading:

1. Sandy Stone, "The Empire Strikes Back: A Posttranssexual Manifesto," [1987], rev. ed. 2000. First published in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity*, eds. Kristina Straub and Julia Epstein (New York: Routledge 1991).
2. Beatriz [Paul] Preciado, "The Micropolitics of Gender in the Pharmacopornographic Era: Experimentation, Voluntary Intoxication, in *Testo Junkie: Sex, Drugs, and Biopolitics in the Pharmacopornographic Era*, trans. Bruce Benderson (New York: The Feminist Press, 2013), 333-98.
3. Eva Hayward, "Spiderwomen," in *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, eds. Reina Gossett, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017), 255-79.

Week 6: Crip Theory, Compulsory Ablebodiedness, Cripistemologies

Discuss McRuer + McArthur and Constantina

Discuss Puar and Discuss Theory-in-Practice Project #2 Required

Reading:

1. Robert McRuer, "Introduction: Compulsory Able-Bodiedness and Queer/Disabled Existence," in *Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability* (New York: NYU Press, 2006), 1-32.
2. Park McArthur and Constantina Zavitsanos, "The Guild of the Brave Poor Things," *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, eds. Reina Gossett, Eric Stanley, and Johanna Burton (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017), 236-54.
3. Jasbir K. Puar, "Disabled Diaspora, Rehabilitating State: The Queer Politics of Reproduction in Palestine/Israel," in *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 95-125; 198-212.

Week 7: Worldmaking in Black: Queer Color Critique, Anti-Blackness, Queer Atlantic

Discuss Ferguson and Bassichis & Spade

Discuss Tinsley

Required Reading:

1. Kyla Wazana Tompkins, "Intersections of Race, Gender, and Sexuality: Queer of Color Critique," in *Cambridge Companion to Gay and Lesbian American Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 173-89.
2. Morgan Bassichis and Dean Spade, "Queer Politics and Anti-Blackness," in *Queer Necropolitics*, eds. Jin Haritaworn, Adi Kuntsman, and Silvia Posocco (London: Routledge, 2014), 191-210.
3. Omise'eke Natasha Tinsley, "Black Atlantic, Queer Atlantic: Queer Imaginings of the Middle Passage," *GLQ* 14.2 (2008), 191-215.

Week 8: Queer Negativity, Queer Wildness

Discuss Bersani and Edelman

Discuss Halberstam

Required Reading:

1. Leo Bersani, "Is the Rectum a Grave?" *October* 43 (1987): 197-222.
2. Lee Edelman, "The Future is Kid Stuff," *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 1-31.
3. Jack Halberstam, "Wildness, Loss, Death," *Social Text* 121, 32.4 (2014): 137-48.

Week 9: "Bring Out Your Dead": Melancholy, Mourning

Discuss Butler + Freud

Discuss Muñoz + Gossett

Required Reading:

4. Judith Butler, "Melancholy Gender/Refused Identification," in *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 132-50.
5. Sigmund Freud, "Mourning and Melancholia" in *The Freud Reader*, ed. Peter Gay (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989), 584-88.
6. José Esteban Muñoz, "Photographies of Mourning: Melancholia and Ambivalence in Van DerZee, Mapplethorpe, and Looking for Langston," in *Disidentifications: Queers of Color and the Performance of Politics* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 57-74.
7. Che Gossett, "Pulse, Beat, Rhythm, Cry: Orlando and the Queer and Trans Necropolitics of Loss and Mourning," *Verso Blog* (5 July 2016), <https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/2747-pulse-beat-rhythm-cry-orlando-and-the-queer-and-trans-necropolitics-of-loss-and-mourning>

Week 11: Killjoys and Temporal Drag: Queer Theory & Feminist Theory

Discuss Ahmed + Solanas

Discuss Freeman + Wittig and Discuss Final Project (due May 11)

Required Reading:

Sara Ahmed, "A Killjoy Manifesto," in *Living a Feminist Life* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), 251-68.

Valerie Solanas, Selection from *The SCUM Manifesto*, in *In a Different Light: Visual Culture, Sexual Identity, and Queer Practice*, edited by Nayland Blake, Lawrence Rinder, and Amy Scholder (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1995), 267-79.

Elizabeth Freeman, "Deep Lez: Temporal Drag and the Specters of Feminism" in *Time Binds: Queer Temporalities, Queer Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 59-93.

Monique Wittig, Selection from *The Lesbian Body*, trans. David Le Vay (1973; New York: William Morrow, 1975), 15-41.

Week 12: Not, Not Yet, Still Here: Archive Fever, Archive Feel

Discuss Lord + Snorton

Discuss Sharpe

Required Reading:

1. Catherine Lord, "Their Memory is Playing Tricks on Her: Notes toward a Calligraphy of Rage," in *Wack!: Art and the Feminist Revolution* (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art/Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2007), 441-3.
2. C. Riley Snorton, "DeVine's Cut: Public Memory and the Politics of Martyrdom," in *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 177-98.
3. Christina Sharpe, "The Wake," in *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 1-22.

Week 13: Camp, Queer Aesthetics

Discuss Sontag

Discuss Tsang and Moten + Oiticica + Takemoto Required

Reading:

1. Susan Sontag, "Notes on 'Camp'" in *Camp: Queer Aesthetics and the Performing Subject*, ed. Fabio Cleto (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1999), 53-65.
2. Wu Tsang and Fred Moten, "All Terror, All Beauty," *Trap Door: Trans Cultural Production and the Politics of Visibility*, eds. Reina Gossett, Eric A. Stanley, and Johanna Burton (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2017), 339-48.
3. Hélio Oiticica, "Mario Montez, Tropicamp," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context, and Enquiry* 28 (2011): 16-21.
4. Tina Takemoto, "Notes on Internment Camp," *Art Journal* 72 (2013): 54-57.

Week 14: Queer Landscaping, Queer Ecology

Discuss Anzaldúa

Discuss Casid + N'yongo

Required Reading:

1. Gloría Anzaldúa, "La conciencia de la mestiza/Towards a New Consciousness," in *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987; San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1999), 99-113.
2. Jill H. Casid, "Epilogue: Landscape in, around, and under the Performative," *Women & Performance: a journal of feminist theory* 21.1 (2011), 97-116.
3. Tavia N'yongo, "Back to the Garden: Queer Ecology in Samuel Delany's *Heavenly Breakfast*," *American Literary History*. 24.2 (2012): 747-767.

Week 15: Queer and Posthuman

Discuss Deleuze and Guattari May

Discuss Luciano and Chen

Required Reading:

1. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Selections from "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal," in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism & Schizophrenia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 272-82, 291-8.
2. Dana Luciano and Mel Y. Chen, "Has the Queer Ever Been Human," *GLQ* 21:2-3 (2015): 183-200.

