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ENGL 380-01, Introduction to Queer Theory, Spring 2013

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Spring 2013, Rhodes College
Introduction to Queer Theory

Mark Behr

Tue/Thu 12.30-1.45

901-843 3979

Office hours: Wed 1-4pm or by appointment

The Course: The course aims to introduce students to the key debates and concepts that have arisen with the development of an academic field of inquiry called 'queer theory.' We will read various theoretical texts (queer theory) that we will attempt to make use of through application to our own lives/sexual identities, gender identities, as well as to films, non-fiction texts as well as selections of fiction. We will be asking questions such as: What are the problems inherent in the concepts homosexual, gay, lesbian, straight and bisexual? What is the relationship of queer to feminist? What of transsexuals, transgenders, intersexed people and polysexualities? Does queer provide us with the possibility of a political program of action or is queering all a game? What assistance does Queer Theory offer to our grasp of the complexities of sexual and gender identity?

Course Outcomes: Students are knowledgeable on the history of the development of queer theory and are able to apply theoretical concepts in their daily lives, in other academic fields and to their reading of primary literary, cinematographic and cultural texts.

Required Books:

1. Wilchins, Riki: Queer Theory, Gender Theory: An Instant Primer
2. Jagose, Annamarie: Queer Theory – An Introduction
3. Winterson, Jeanette: Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit
4. Monette, Paul: Becoming A Man
5. Feinberg, Leslie: Stone Butch Blues
6. Cunningham, Michael: The Hours
7. Extracts on File Serve: O'Keefe & Fox: Finding Me: Tales, Sex, Gender Diversity

Other Texts:

Various Articles on the File Server

Various Films on Moodle (watched before class IF YOU WISH unless otherwise noted.

Most movies are optional, again, unless noted for discussion):

1. The Celluloid Closet
2. Boys Don't Cry
3. Tongues Untied
4. The Crying Game
5. The Hours
6. Kiss of the Spider Woman
7. Before Night Falls
8. The Kids Are Alright
9. Brokeback Mountain
10. Milk

11. Paris Is Burning
12. Fire (by Krishna Jhalani)
13. Philadelphia
14. Priscilla Queen of the Desert
15. After Sex (Eric Amadio)
16. Show me Love (Lukas Moodysson)
17. TransAmerica
18. Pariah

Quizzes, Tests & Exams: In addition to the mid-term and the final take-home exam there are two scheduled tests for this class. However, if class discussion lags or if, in my opinion, preparation for class is not up to scratch, I shall include more frequent methods of assessment, at times without announcing them in advance. Scores for any such unscheduled assessment will be included in your grade. Should you miss any such tests for whatever reason, it is your responsibility to reschedule with me.

Term Paper: As part of this course you will write one standardized academic term paper of no less than eight and no more than ten pages in length. The paper – a personal essay titled How Queer I Am: -- will make use of secondary sources such as journal articles and is to be concerned with your own gender and sexuality. The paper will demonstrate your grasp of the relevance of Queer Theory to your life. No term paper or exam that is handed in after the deadline will be accepted. Format: Times New Roman, Twelve Point Font, Spaced at 1.5.

Attendance: You are allowed three excused absences and no unexcused absences. Absences are not excused unless you have offered me a reasonable motivation such as illness, disease or disaster before class. After three excused absences your grade will automatically go down by one third of a letter, for example, from a B+ to a B. I will penalize you a third of a letter-grade for each two unexcused absences. Being late for class will be severely frowned upon. Three late arrivals will constitute an absence.

The Hours: This course requires a substantial amount of reading and watching films. I suggest you will have to do at the very least an hour of reading per day in addition to work on your term paper and your take-home exams in order to complete the course with a reasonable grade.

Classroom Language and Culture: We will at times be working with provocative material, subject matter and language that may be uncomfortable to some of us. As a teacher I will aim to maintain a safe and respectful space while also at times making use of provocative remarks and language aimed at stimulating debate and inquiry. You are free to come and discuss the classroom culture with me if you are experiencing problems in this regard.

Intellectual honesty: All work is assumed to be the student's own and produced exclusively for the course in which it is submitted. Papers written for one course, even if revised, are not to be submitted in another without the instructor's prior approval.

Borrowing of ideas or language from other sources (including published material, other student papers, the internet or other electronic resources, etc.) must be carefully documented. Students are advised against posting their work on the internet since doing so may lead to suspicion of plagiarism. Students are advised to maintain drafts of their work to verify its originality. Cases of suspected plagiarism may be referred to the Honor Council, and the student if convicted will receive a grade of F in the course in addition to sanctions assigned by the Council. Clear evidence of plagiarism (failure to use quotation marks around verbatim or copied language, failure to adequately paraphrase, and failure to cite the source of quoted, paraphrased, or borrowed text and ideas), regardless of the Council hearing outcome, may likewise result in failure of the course. Carelessness in documenting sources, even if not technically plagiarism, will be penalized as the instructor deems appropriate. If you are uncertain about how or whether to document sources, consult your teacher.

Disabilities: Rhodes College makes every effort to provide appropriate accommodations for students with documented disabilities. Students may request accommodations by making an appointment to speak to Melissa Butler, the Coordinator of Disability Services.

Phone: 843 3944.

E-Mail: mbutler@rhodes.edu

Final Grades:

20%: Participation

20%: Mid-Term Take-Home Exam

20%: In Class Tests

20%: Final Paper: Personal Essay

20%: Final Take-Home Exam

Participation: Because we will be discussing theory, preparing to engage about the readings, stories and films, participation is key. Coming to class, and coming to class on time, creates the best environment for enthusiastic and thoughtful conversation. Therefore: Lateness will be severely frowned upon. Two late arrivals equal one absence. Absences are not excused, unless you have a good reason, as in disease or disaster. You are allowed only two excused absences for this class. For each absence after the allotted two, your grade will go down half a letter.

Letters of Recommendation: Students frequently request letters from professors to assist them in being selected for graduate schools and/or into careers in later life. To write an honest, thorough, sincere and appropriate letter of recommendation takes time, effort and focus. In addition to the most basic gesture of respect such as giving your referee ample advance warning and therefore time to compose a meaningful letter and make submissions, you may consider the use of an occasional note of thanks, or, of keeping your referee abreast of the outcomes of whatever you have applied for. (I turn fifty this year and I'm still occasionally asking former colleagues and teachers for letters of recommendation). As you may be requesting letters for years to come, it may stand you in good stead to keep your referees abreast of major developments in your professional life.

Schedule:

- Week 1: 01/10 *Introduction: Syllabus
*How do I narrate myself?
*The Celluloid Closet (Film)
- Week 2: 01/15 *Before Night Falls (Film)
*Gayle S Rubin: Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory
Of the Politics of Sexuality
- 01/17 *Judith Butler: Imitation and Gender Insubordination
*Jamaica Kincaid: Girl
*Mark Behr: Boy
- Week 3: 01/22 *Tongues Untied (Film)
*Thomas Glave: The Final Inning
- 01/24 *Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick: Epistemology of the Closet
- Week 4: 01/29 *In Class Test on Rubin, Butler and Sedgwick
- 01/31 *Overview of Exam
*Ricki Wilchins: Queer Theory, Gender Theory, pp 1-82
- Week 5: 02/05 *Ricki Wilchens: Queer Theory, Gender Theory, pp 82-157
- 02/07 *We Discuss: Boys Don't Cry (Film)
*Adrienne Rich: Compulsory Heterosexuality and Contemporary
Lesbian Existence
- Week 6: 02/12 *Leo Bersani: Is The Rectum A Grave?
*Paris Is Burning (Film)
*The Kids Are Alright (Film)
- 02/14 *We discuss: Pariah (Film)
*Eve Sedgwick: How to Bring Up Your Kids Gay
- Week 7: 02/19 *We Discuss: Brokeback Mountain (Film)
**Philadelphia (Film)
- 02/21 *Annamarie Jagose: Queer Theory, An Introduction: pp 1-71
- Week 8: 02/26 *Annamarie Jagose: Queer Theory, An Introduction: pp 72-136
- 02/28 *Jeanette Winterson: Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit

- Week 9: 03/05 *Jeanette Winterson: Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit
03/07 *Paul Monette: Becoming a Man
*Milk (Movie)
- Week 10: Spring Break
*Kiss of the Spiderwoman (Movie)
*The Crying Game (Movie)
*The Hours (Movie)
- Week 11: 03/19 *Paul Monette: Becoming a Man
03/21 *Leslie Feinberg: Stonebutch Blues
- Week 12: 03/26 *Leslie Feinberg: Stonebutch Blues
- Week 13: 04/02 *TransAmerica (Movie)
*Marjorie Garber: The Surgical Construction of Gender
04/04 *Serena Nanda: Hijras as Neither Man Nor Woman
*Harriet Whitehead: The Bow and the Burden Strap: A New Look
At Institutionalized Homosexuality in Native America
- Week 14: 04/09 *Michael Cunningham: The Hours
04/11 *Michael Cunningham: The Hours
Cornell West: The New Cultural Politics of Difference
- Week 15: 04/16 * O'Keefe & Fox: Finding The Real Me (Fileserve)
04/18 * 'Keefe & Fox: Finding The Real Me (Fileserve)
- Week 16 04/23 *Kobena Mercer: Looking for Trouble
*Richard Meyer: Robert Mapplethorpe and the Discipline
Of Photography
04/25 *Final Class: Drag and Summary
*Julian Barnes: The Stowaway
- Week 17 05/01 Hand in Take-Home Exam
05/02 Hand in Personal Essay

End ...