This course explores debates among contemporary queer theorists and their relationship to politics. Specifically, we will look at issues of homonationalism, pinkwashing, incarceration, violence and inequity through the work of thinkers such as Jasbir Puar, Lisa Duggan, Dean Spade, and Sara Shulman, and Judith Butler, among others. Fundamentally, this class questions the stability of identity categories and looks at how queer people are caught within the processes of nationalism, globalization, neoliberalism, and history. We look at urgent political issues facing queer people as a way to think generatively about the potential solutions, strategies, and sites of struggle offered by theorists and activists.

Course Objectives:

→ To identify major themes in contemporary queer theory.
→ To develop a critical analysis of the study of sexuality and gender identity and their relationship to politics.
→ To understand the ways in which sexuality and gender identity intersect with other categories such as race, class, nationality, and (dis)ability status.
→ To engage with theory and politics praxis through weekly readings on contemporary political topics.
→ To present theoretical ideas and concepts from the reading cogently to the class.
→ To reflect critically and analytically on the readings and discussions through the mid-term paper and the final research paper.

Course Assessment:

Attendance/Participation (15%)
Reflection Essays (5% each, 20% total)
Presentation (15%)
Midterm Paper (20%)
Final Paper (30%)
Attendance / Participation (15%):

Attendance and participation are crucial components to successfully grappling with the texts and developing critical and analytic insight within queer theory. Students are expected to attend each session barring an emergency. If you expect to miss a class please use the University reporting website [https://sims.rutgers.edu/ssra/] to indicate the date and reason for your absence. An e-mail will be automatically sent to me. **Failure to report absences or missing more than one class will negatively impact your grade. Missing 3 classes will result in an automatic failure of the course.**

Reflection Essays (5% each, 20% total):

The class will be divided into three groups for the purposes of writing reflection essays. Each group will be assigned four dates on which they must submit a 500 word reflection on one or more of the week’s readings. The groups will alternate every week and submit their essays no later than 8 PM each Sunday before a class meeting. These essays will help to motivate our discussion and give each student an opportunity to raise questions informally about the text. These essays will be shared with the class and I highly encourage discussion leaders to draw on them to develop their presentations (more information on presentation below).

Successful reflection essays will draw out the major themes of one or more of the readings for that week, provide connections between the assigned week’s readings and the rest of the syllabus, and pose questions for the class. These essays should not exceed 500 words. I will provide information as the semester begins as to how we will share these essays with each other before class.

In-Class Presentations (15%):

After the first week, students will sign up to present the central concepts to the class in our meetings. Depending on the size of the class you may pair with one or two other students. Your presentation should provide a brief synopsis of the readings, their interpretation of the texts, and pose a handful of questions to initiate class discussion. I encourage students to highlight ideas, thoughts, and questions brought up in the reflection essays, in addition to providing their own thoughts about the text at hand. Students should feel free to use videos, photos, music, and other multimedia objects to get at the central ideas for the week and to provoke discussion. The initial presentation should last 15-20 minutes, leading to a broader discussion.
Midterm Paper (20%):

Students will be required to write a 5-7 page paper based on two of the readings covered in the class. The prompts for this paper will be given out as the due date approaches, but in general a successful paper will present a bold and compelling argument based in textual evidence, properly formatted and cited. The midterm paper will be due Monday March 10th at the beginning of class.

Final Research Paper (30%):

The final assignment for the course will be a research paper of 10-12 pages. For this paper you may use texts from the syllabus, but you will also be required to engage in research beyond class. The idea here is to engage in a contemporary site of political struggle and then begin to theorize about the problem at hand. We will work extensively in-class on developing a research question and developing a process to answer that question. More details about the final paper will be given throughout the semester. The final paper is due Monday May 12 at 5:00 pm.

Required Texts:


All other readings will be provided electronically.
Course Schedule:

Weeks 1-3: Foundations

Week 1: January 27th Introduction

→ What is Queer Theory?

Week 2: February 3rd


Week 3: February 10th Recognition vs. Redistribution: The Butler Fraser Debates

Weeks 4-7: Nations, Bodies, and Borders

Week 4: February 17th


Week 5: February 24th


Week 6: March 3rd

Week 7: March 10th  **Midterm Due**


Week 8: March 17th  **– SPRING BREAK**

Weeks 9-11: Infectious Equality

Week 9: March 31st


Week 10: April 7th

Week 11: April 14\textsuperscript{th}


Weeks 12-14: Towards a Queer International

Week 12: April 21\textsuperscript{st}


Week 13: April 28\textsuperscript{th}


Week 14: May 5\textsuperscript{th}


Final Paper Due May 12\textsuperscript{th} @ 5 pm.