

SEXUALITY AND POLITICAL ECONOMY

Anthropology 2614 / Spring 2018

Prof. George Paul Meiu
Departments of Anthropology and
African & African American Studies
Harvard University
Office: Tozzer Anthropology Building 213
Phone: 617-496-3462
Email: meiu@fas.harvard.edu

Class meets Thursdays between 1:00
to 3:00pm in Tozzer 203.

Office Hours: Wednesdays 1:00-
3:00pm (please sign up in advance)
or by appointment.

This seminar explores the complex links between sexuality, capitalism and power. Sexuality has long represented a central domain for the creation and contestation of subjects and sovereignties, labor and capital, relatedness and belonging, desire and development, security and violence. With the publication of Michel Foucault's *The History of Sexuality* (1976), the role of modern forms of power that work to discipline subjects and regulate populations has become central to how scholars conceptualize sexuality. By comparison, however, the relation between sexuality, the capitalist economy, and the myriad forms of postcolonial sovereignties has only recently become the topic of rigorous analysis. In this seminar, we revisit classic theories by Freud, Foucault, Lacan and Fanon as well as texts in feminist, queer, and postcolonial theory in order to craft a conceptual vocabulary for understanding emerging configurations of sex and politics in late capitalism. We ask: Under what historical circumstances does sexuality become a marker of inclusion, exclusion or exceptionalism in relation to race, ethnicity, culture, and state politics? What are the relations between commodities, discourses of sexuality, and the erotic practices of concrete historical actors? And what do we learn about globalization when we think of sexuality as a central domain of economic production, social reproduction, and political belonging?

Course Requirements

Grades will reflect the students' level of engagement with the readings and assignments of this seminar as well as the extent to which students will have acquired critical knowledge and analytical skills throughout the semester.

- ❑ *Attendance and participation (30%).* Attendance is mandatory. Students are expected to participate in class discussions by formulating questions, responses, and critiques relevant to the assigned readings. To help you participate actively in class discussions, I would like you to write as you read. For each class, please prepare a short review question concerning one or more of the assigned readings. A good review question should very briefly sum up a selected argument of the reading(s). Then, it should unpack the argument critically, either by treating it on its own terms or by comparing it to issues emerging in discussions, lectures, and other readings covered for this class. To make your time in class a productive and pleasant experience for everyone, I ask that you do not use phones, laptops, or tablets.
- ❑ *In-Class Presentation: Introducing the Readings (10%).* Each week a group of two or three students will initiate discussion by raising a set of issues and questions related to the readings. Students will briefly introduce some of the main points of the readings assigned for that day and pose

some questions for class discussion. Then, they will contribute to the discussion by raising new questions and critical points. Students will be graded according to how well they prepared to discuss the readings. The goal of this exercise is to encourage students to engage rigorously with the readings, unpack their arguments, and discover their significance. A sign-up sheet is circulated during the first and second week of classes.

- ❑ *Writing Assignment (60%)*. There are two options for completing the writing assignment.

Option A—Two Response Papers (each worth 30% of the final grade): Response papers must deal with a concept or question that has emerged in the readings of the first half and second half of the seminar respectively. You are encouraged to choose no more than three authors and, through a close reading of each, make an argument about their respective perspectives on a specific concept and—most importantly—on what we can learn from comparing/contrasting them. Each paper must be 7-8 pages, double-spaced. The first paper is due *March 9*, the second is due *May 3*.

Option B—Research Paper (60%): This option is open *only* to graduate students who find it helpful at this point to research and write a rigorous paper that engages directly with sexuality studies or queer theory. Research papers must be based on original, in-depth ethnographic or library research. They must address current conceptual concerns and also reflect a strong engagement with the readings, lectures, and discussions for this seminar. Papers must be 16-20 pages long. In order to choose this option, students must submit a 250-word proposal with a tentative bibliography by *February 15*. Research papers are due on *May 3*.

Please drop off your paper in the professor's mail box in Tozzer 205. Late submissions will result in the loss of 5% per day from the final grade.

Required Texts

The following texts are available for purchase at the Coop Bookstore and for consultation on a three-hour reserve at the Tozzer Library.

- ❑ Amar, Paul. 2013. *Security Archipelago: Human Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the End of Neoliberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press
- ❑ Boellstorff, Tom. 2005. *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nationhood in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- ❑ Freud, Sigmund. 2000. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. Basic Books Classics.
- ❑ Foucault, Michel. 1980. *The History of Sexuality. Vol. 1*. New York: Vintage Books.
- ❑ Puar, Jasbir. 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- ❑ Stout, Noelle. 2014. *After Love: Queer Intimacy and Erotic Economies in Post-Soviet Cuba*. Durham: Duke University Press.

All other readings will be available on the course website (on Canvas).

Weekly Schedule

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| WEEK 1
January 25 | <p>INTRODUCTION TO THE SEMINAR</p> <p>No readings</p> <p><i>Film:</i> “Luchando” (2007); directed by Noelle Stout (55 min).</p> |
| WEEK 2
February 1 | <p>THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SEX – <i>towards a working definition</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Rubin, Gayle. [1984] 1993. “Thinking Sex: Notes for a Radical Theory of the Politics of Sexuality.” In H. Abelove <i>et al</i> (eds) <i>The Lesbian and Gay Studies Reader</i>. Pp. 3-36. New York: Routledge. ❑ Altman, Denis. 2001. “Sex and Political Economy.” In Altman D. <i>Global Sex</i>. Pp. 34-51. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ❑ Magubane, Zine. 2005. “Capitalism, Female Embodiment, and the Transformation of Commodification into Sexuality” In Magubane, Z. <i>Bringing the Empire Home: Race, Class, and Gender in Britain and Colonial South Africa</i>. Pp. 14-39. Chicago: University of Chicago Press. ❑ Hemmings, Clare. 2012. “Sexuality, Subjectivity... and Political Economy?” <i>Subjectivity</i> 5(2): 121-139. |

PART I THE SUBJECT OF SEXUALITY: KEY THEORIES

- | | |
|-----------------------|---|
| WEEK 3
February 8 | <p>FOUCAULT – <i>discourse, discipline, and regulation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Foucault, Michel. 1980. <i>The History of Sexuality. Vol 1</i>. New York: Vintage (Read Pp. 1-114; 135-159). |
| WEEK 4
February 15 | <p>FREUD – <i>libido, repression, and the unconscious</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Freud, Sigmund. [1905] 1975. <i>Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality</i>. New York: Basic Books. (Read Pp. 1-109). |
| WEEK 5
February 22 | <p>LACAN – <i>language, desire, and the ‘big other’</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Lacan, Jacques. [1949] 2006. “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the <i>I</i> Function.” In J. Lacan <i>Ecrits: Selected Writings</i>. Pp. 75-81. New York: Norton. ❑ Lacan, Jacques. [1966] 1982. “The Meaning of the Phallus.” In J. Lacan <i>Feminine Sexuality</i>. Pp. 74-85. New York: Norton. |

- ❑ Dean, Tim. 2000. "Beyond the Couch." In T. Dean *Beyond Sexuality*. Pp. 1-21. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❑ Zupancic, Alenka. 2017. "It's Getting Strange in Here..." In Zupancic A. *What is Sex?* Pp. 5-19. Cambridge: MIT Press.

WEEK 6
March 1

FANON – *race, consciousness, and the fetish*

- ❑ Fanon, Franz. 1952. *Black Skin, White Masks*. New York: Grove Press.
(Read Pp. 1-63)
- ❑ McClintock, Anne. 1995. "Psychoanalysis, Race, and Female Fetishism." In Anne McClintock *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*. Pp.181-203. New York: Routledge.

March 2
(3-5:30pm)

Movie Viewing and Discussion

Movie: "Paradise: Love" (2013); directed by Ulrich Seidl (120 min)

PART II

SEX, POLITICS, AND THE POLITICAL ECONOMY: THEORIZING THE LINKS

WEEK 7
March 8

COMMODITY – *sex, risk, and consumption in late capitalism*

- ❑ Simmel, Georg. [1907] 1971. "Prostitution." In Levine D. N. (ed.) *On Individuality and Social Forms*. Pp. 121-126. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❑ Laqueur, Thomas. 1992. "Sexual Desire and the Market Economy during the Industrial Revolution." In D. Stanton (ed.) *Discourses of Sexuality: From Aristotle to AIDS*. Pp. 185–215. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- ❑ Singer, Linda. 1993. "Sex and the Logic of Late Capitalism." In L. Singer *Erotic Welfare: Sexual Theory and Politics in the Age of Epidemics*. Pp. 34-61. New York: Routledge.
- ❑ Bernstein, Elizabeth. 2007. "Sexual Commerce in Postindustrial Culture." In Bernstein E. *Temporarily Yours: Intimacy, Authenticity, and the Commerce of Sex*. Pp. 1-21. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❑ Morris, Rosalind. 2008. "Rush/Panic/Rush: Speculations on Value of Life and Death in South Africa's Age of AIDS." *Public Culture* 20(2): 199-231.

March 9 *First Response Paper Due*

March 10-18 *Spring Break*

WEEK 8
March 22 CITIZENSHIP – *intimacy, law, and the economy*

- ❑ Berlant, Lauren. 1997. "The Intimate Public Sphere." In Berlant L. *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship*. Pp. 1-21. Durham: Duke University Press.
- ❑ Brandzel, Amy. 2016. "The Violence of the Normative." In Brandzel A. *Against Citizenship: The Violence of the Normative*. Pp. 1-30. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- ❑ Lancaster, Roger. 2011. "Fear Eats the Soul." In R. Lancaster *Sex Panic and the Punitive State*. Pp. 1-18. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- ❑ Macharia, Keguro. 2013. "Queer Kenya in Law and Policy." In Ekine S. and H. Abbas. *Queer African Reader*. Pp. 273-289. Nairobi: Pambazuka Press.
- ❑ Lorway, Robert. 2015. "Introduction" and "Subjectivity as a Political Territory." In R. Lorway *Namibia's Rainbow Project: Gay Rights in an African Nation*. Pp. 1-13; 30-59. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

WEEK 9
March 29 QUEER ETHNOGRAPHY – *methods, potentialities, utopias*

- ❑ Muñoz, Jose Esteban. 2009. "Queerness as Horizon" and "Ghosts of Public Sex." In J. E. Muñoz *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. Pp. 19-48. New York: New York University Press.
- ❑ Bersani, Leo. [1987] 2010. "Is the Rectum a Grave?" In Bersani L. *Is the Rectum a Grave? And Other Essays*. Pp. 3-31. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- ❑ Hoad, Neville. 2007. "African Sodomy in the Missionary Position: Corporeal Intimacies and Signifying Regimes." In Hoad N. *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization*. Pp. 1-20. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- ❑ Nzegwu, Nkiru. 2011. "Osunality (or African Eroticism)." In Tamale S. *African Sexualities: A Reader*. Pp. 253-270. Oxford: Pambazuka Press.
- ❑ Hendriks, Thomas. 2017. "Erotiques Cannibales': A Queer Ontological Take on Desire from Urban Congo." *Sexualities* 1-15 (forthcoming)

PART III POSTCOLONIAL SEXUALITIES

- WEEK 10
April 5
- THE GLOBAL NATION – *language, nationalism, and globalization*
- ❑ Boelstorff, Tom. 2005. *The Gay Archipelago: Sexuality and Nationhood in Indonesia*. Princeton: Princeton University Press. (Read Chapters 1, 3, 4, 5, and 8).
- WEEK 11
April 12
- HOMONATIONALISM – *the dialectics of liberalism and terrorism*
- ❑ Puar, Jasbir. 2007. *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*. Durham: Duke University Press. (Read Introduction and Chapters 1, 2, and 4).
- WEEK 12
April 19
- THE HUMAN-SECURITY STATE – *populism, rescue, and moral securitization*
- ❑ Amar, Paul. 2013. *Security Archipelago: Human Security States, Sexuality Politics, and the end of Neoliberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press (Read Introduction and Chapters 2, 4, 5, and 6).
- WEEK 13
April 26
- EROTIC ECONOMIES – *sex, money, and consumerist fantasies*
- ❑ Stout, Noelle. 2014. *After Love: Queer Intimacy and Erotic Economies in Post-Soviet Cuba*. Durham: Duke University Press. (Read Introduction, Chapters 1, 2, 4, 5, & Conclusion).
- May 3
- Second Response Paper (or, Research Paper) Due.*