“The Color of Sex:
Race, Gender, and Sexuality in Contemporary Performance”
Mondays and Wednesdays, 2:00 p.m. – 3:15 p.m.
Fall 2011

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Course Description:

Only by subjecting the categories of whiteness, masculinity and normative heterosexuality to constant scrutiny can the fiction of their monolithic power be decentered and fragmented: no longer the one and the same that defines itself in terms of its other but another among others.

- Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano

Taking up the charge posed by Yvonne Yarbro-Bejarano, this course aims to decenter white, masculine heterosexuality by introducing students both critical material and performance texts that challenge patriarchal, Eurocentric, and heteronormative narratives in American theatre as well as within the performances of “everyday life.”

This course juxtaposes theoretical readings, films, and plays that address portrayals of masculinity/femininity, gendered hierarchies, and/or queer identity through African American, Latina/o American, and Asian American subject positions. In doing so, the material covered in this class will not only prompts student to consider the inherently independent nature of race, sex, and gender, but it will explore how our social scripts regarding these identifying characteristics are both perpetuated and interrogated through theatre and film. In doing so, we will wrestle with a number of proliferation questions, for example: How does the issue of race and culture complicate the staging of gender politics? Can one argue that one issue necessarily takes precedence over the other? How do varying racial narratives/histories inform performative scripts of class versus race? In terms of sexuality, how can a play stage images of Asian, Latino and/or Black men to critique assumptions regarding White masculinity? Is the presentation of these alternative scripts ultimately liberating, or do they simply create new conceptual binds?

Of particular interest to this course is the fact that the representation of queer identities is a relatively uncultivated terrain among artists-of-color. Although there are dramatists of color placing gay and lesbian characters and issues on the page (Robert O’Hara, Cherrie Moraga, and Oliver Mayer, among them) their work has yet to receive the critical attention and production opportunities their artistry—and their lives—deserve. We will discuss the social and cultural explanations for this artistic phenomenon, and students will be charged to participate in the excavation and recognition of new and unattended texts. This, of course, reflects the importance of this course: there are stories that have been denied, silenced, ignored, and forgotten that need to be uncovered and addressed.
Course Objectives:

- To introduce undergrad students student to Critical Race Theory, Feminist/Gender Theories, and Queer Theory.
- To teach students how to read theory and learn how to incorporate theoretical material within their own analyses and scholarly work.
- To broaden students’ knowledge of the dramatic and cinematic canon by introducing them to performance texts by African American, Latino/a American, and Asian American artists.
- To cultivate students’ analytical, writing, communication, and research skills.

Required Texts

Queer Theory: An Introduction by Annamarie Jagose
NYU Press, 1997
ISBN-10: 0814742343

The Feminist Spectator as Critic by Jill Dolan
University of Michigan Press, 1991
ISBN-10: 0472081608

Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s by Michael Omi and Howard Winant
Routledge, second edition, 1994
ISBN-10: 0415908647

Blackboard Course Packet: The “e-course packet” will be material listed under “Course Documents” within our course ELMS site. I will post all of the required plays for this course. The instructor STRONGLY ENCOURAGES students to print out materials and bring them to class. Likewise, students are strongly DISCOURAGED from relying on laptops or other electronic devices to review material during class time. Take notes while you read!!

Required Viewings

LIVE PERFORMANCE – Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South by E. Patrick Johnson
Wednesday, October 5th at 7:30 p.m.
Students enrolled in 408G will pay a discounted rate of $20.00 (regular tickets are $41.00). Transportation will be provided for the October 5th showing. If you cannot attend the October 5th performance, you can arrange to see it on your own at an earlier date (the show begins September 13th). The Signature Theatre is located at 4200 Campbell Avenue, Arlington, VA 22206. Phone: 703-573.7328. For more information, see http://www.signature-theatre.org

VARIOUS FILMS (as listed on the class schedule). When possible, the required films will be made available for viewing through Hornbake Library’s reservations or video streaming. If this becomes an impossibility, there will be at least one pre-arranged class viewing time for each film (this viewing, however, will take place outside of regular class time). Students may
also view the material on their own by obtaining the films via Netflix, their local library, Blockbuster, etc.

Grading Percentages

Participation: 10%
Quizzes: 30%
Critical Papers #1 and #2: 30% (15% each)
Oral Presentations: 5%
Final Research Paper: 25%

Extra Credit Opportunities may arise at various times during the semester. All extra credit opportunities must be approved by the instructor. Two pre-approved opportunities are: E. Patrick Johnson’s lecture on Monday, October 3rd at 12 noon (location TBA) and the Bill T. Jones lecture on October 24th at 5:30 p.m. For extra credit to be received, students must not only attend the event, but you must turn in a 1-2 page response the Wednesday following the event (October 5th and October 26th, respectively). Direct quotes and/or lecture references MUST be included in the response, demonstrating that students listened intently to the event (take notes!). Your written response should also reflect the ways the event engages with the themes and critical ideas discussed in class. A response that does not adequately fulfill these requirements will not be graded. All extra credit responses will take on a similar format.

Course Requirements

- Participation: Class participation is VERY important. Students are expected to attend class so that they can be active participants in class discussion. In addition, students are expected to schedule time to meet with the instructor on October 26th for a “Mid-Term Meeting.”

- Quizzes: Quizzes will be administered at the beginning of every class session. Quizzes take on two different styles: 1. Question/Answer format (the instructor will ask a question, students will write the answer), and 2. Reflective Responses to the readings (again, prompted by a top or question(s) provided by the instructor. The Question/Answer quizzes will be graded in percentage terms (10/10 = 100%, 9/10 = 90%, etc.) and the Reflective Responses will be given letter grades. In accordance with the University of Maryland’s attendance policy, I will drop two of the lowest (or missing) quiz grades.

- Critical Paper #1 and Paper #2: Students will write two 3-5 page papers. You will devise your own thesis with the instructor’s approval and your paper must incorporate at least one of the theoretical texts discussed in class. These papers will also reflect your reading (or viewing) of one of the assigned plays (or movies) OR a performance piece/text approved by the instructor. Your paper will demonstrate your familiarity and knowledge of the texts as well as your own, original analysis of the material. While any additional research is not required for these papers, it is welcomed and encouraged.

    Proper bibliographic/citation format is required (Turabian, MLA, or Chicago). Also note: papers must have a separate title page, be typed using Times New Roman (no larger than 12-point), double-spaced, with no more than a 1-inch margin on any side. Paper #1 is due October 24th and Paper #2 is due November 16th.

    Please note: e-mailed papers will not be accepted; you must hand in hard copies of all your papers.
• **Oral Presentations**: Prior to the completion of your analytical/research paper (see below), you will present a 5-minute summary of your central thesis and exploration/argument to the class. Presentations will take place during the second to last week of class, **December 5th and 7th**.

• **Final Research Paper**: This 8-10 page paper will be an original research paper that uses at least one of our theoretical lenses to investigate a particular topic in African American, Latina/o, or Asian American performance. Students may choose to explore a play or film (or combination of both). Paper topics must meet the approval of the instructor (please note: a paper proposal is due on **November 14th**). Unlike your short papers, the Final Research Paper **will require a substantial amount of research**. Electronic encyclopedia sites (such as Wikipedia) will not be accepted. A maximum of one (1) internet source may be used and it **must meet the approval of the instructor**. Paper must be in proper format as described above in the earlier paper section. The failure to follow these guidelines as noted will adversely affect the grading of your paper. **Please note: e-mailed papers will not be accepted; you must hand in hard copies of all your papers.** You may turn in your paper early, however, the **FINAL DUE DATE/TIME for your research paper is Monday, December 19th at 1:30 p.m.** (in accordance with final exam schedule).

**CLASS SCHEDULE**

**WEEK 1**

Aug. 31  **Introductions, Review of Syllabus**

**WEEK 2**

Sept. 2  **LABOR DAY – NO CLASS**

Sept. 7  **Review: The Art of (Your) Writing**

• Constructing and Defending a Thesis
• Grading Rubric

**WEEK 3**

Sept. 12  **What is “Race?”**

• “Paradigms of Ethnicity, Class, and Nation” (14-47) *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s.*

Sept. 14  **What is “Race?” (continued)**

• “Racial Formation” (48-50, 53-76), *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960s to the 1990s.*

**WEEK 4**

Sept. 19  **Feminist Theory**

• Chapters 1-3 & 5 (pages 1-58, 84-97) in *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* by Jill Dolan

Sept. 21  **Black Feminism**

• “Part I: The Social construction of Black Feminist Thought” (pages 1-44) in *Black Feminist Thought* by Patricia Hill Collins


**WEEK 5**  
**Sept. 26**  
**Gender Theory: Judith Butler**  

**Sept. 28**  
**Queer Theory**  
- Chapters 1-5 (pages 1-57) in *Queer Theory: An Introduction* by Annamarie Jagose

**WEEK 6**  
**Oct. 3**  
**Queer Theory**  
- Chapters 6-8 (pages 58-126) in *Queer Theory: An Introduction* by Annamarie Jagose

**EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY:** PUBLIC LECTURE/RECEPTION  
**Dr. E. Patrick Johnson**, Monday, October 3rd, 12 noon.  
Location TBA. (Free and open to the public)

**Oct. 5**  
**“Quare” Theory**  
- **TONITE - Sweet Tea: Black Gay Men of the South by E. Patrick Johnson.** The Signature Theatre in Arlington, Virginia.

**WEEK 7**  
**Oct. 10**  
**Film Discussion:**  

**Oct. 12**  
**Play Discussion:**  
- *Insurrection: Holding History* by Robert O’Hara

**WEEK 8**  
**Oct. 17**  
**Film Discussion:**  
- *Pick Up the Mic* directed by Alex Hinton (2006)

**Oct. 19**  
**Play Discussion:**  
- *The Brother Size* by Tarrel Alvin McCraney

**WEEK 9**  
**Oct. 24**  
**Mike Boynton Lecture:** “Whiteness, Masculinity, and the Nerd”  
- Reading: TBA  
**** CRITICAL PAPER #1 DUE **

**EXTRA CREDIT OPPORTUNITY:** DEAN’S LECTURE SERIES  
**Bill T. Jones in conversation,** moderated by Leigh Wilson Smiley  
Monday, October 24th at 5:30 PM in the Kay Theatre  
(Free and open to the public)

**Oct. 26**  
**Mid-Term Meetings**
WEEK 10  Oct. 31  **Film Discussion:**
- *The Help* directed by Tate Taylor, written by Tate Taylor (screenplay) and Kathryn Stockett (novel) (2011) -

Nov. 2  **Play Discussion:**
- *In the Blood* by Suzan-Lori Parks

WEEK 11  Nov. 7  **Film Discussion:**
- *Like Water for Chocolate* directed Alfonso Arau, written by Laura Esquivel (1992)

Nov. 9  **Play Discussion:**
- *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* by Suzan-Lori Parks

WEEK 12  Nov. 14  **Film Discussion:**

Nov. 16  **Play Discussion:**
- *Blade to the Heat* by Oliver Mayer

WEEK 13  Nov. 21  **Film Discussion:**
- *The Crying Game* directed and written by Neil Jordan (1992)

IN-CLASS QUIZ – NO WRITTEN RESPONSE
** CRITICAL PAPER #2 DUE **

Nov. 23  **Play Discussion:**
- *M. Butterfly* by David Henry Hwang

WEEK 14  Nov. 28  **Film Discussion:**
- *Blade Runner* directed by Ridley Scott, screenplay by Hampton Fancher and David Peoples (1982) -

Nov. 30  **Play Discussion:**
- *R.A.W. ('cause I’m a woman)* by Diana Son

WEEK 15  Dec. 5  Oral Presentations (based on your Final Research Paper)

Dec. 7  Oral Presentations (based on your Final Research Paper)

WEEK 16  Dec. 12  **Conclusions**
In-class viewing of Margaret Cho

FINAL EXAM WEEK:  Final Research Paper Due on Monday, December 19th at 1:30 p.m.
BELOW ARE THE UNIVERSITY’S POLICIES ON THE HONOR CODE, ACCOMMODATIONS FOR DISABILITIES, ATTENDANCE, AND SEXUAL HARRASSMENT

1. Students with disabilities should contact the instructor at the beginning of the semester to discuss any accommodation for this course.

2. The University has approved a Code of Academic Integrity (http://www.shc.umd.edu/code.html) which prohibits students from cheating on exams, plagiarizing papers, submitting the same paper for credit in two courses without authorization, buying papers, facilitating academic dishonesty, submitting fraudulent documents, and forging signatures. Plagiarism policy: all quotations taken from other authors, including from the Internet, must be indicated by quotation marks and referenced. Paraphrasing must be referenced as well. The following University of Maryland Honor Pledge, approved by the University Senate, should be handwritten and signed on the front page of all papers, projects or other academic assignments submitted for evaluation in this course: "I pledge on my honor that I have not given or received any unauthorized assistance on this assignment/examination."


4. Regular attendance and participation in this class is the best way to grasp the concepts and principles being discussed. However, in the event that a class must be missed due to an illness, the policy in this class is as follows:

   For every medically necessary absence from class (lecture, recitation, or lab), a reasonable effort should be made to notify the instructor in advance of the class. When returning to class, students must bring a note identifying the date of and reason for the absence, and acknowledging that the information in the note is accurate.

   If a student is absent more than 2 time(s), the instructor will require documentation signed by a health care professional in order for the student to have the opportunity to take a missed quiz or turn in work late.

   If a student is absent on days when tests are scheduled, papers are due, or presentations are scheduled he or she is required to notify the instructor in advance, and upon returning to class, bring documentation of the illness, signed by a health care professional. In addition, in order to receive credit for the assignment, the student must fulfill the assignment in the same manner and under the same conditions experienced by his/her classmates.

5. In case of inclement weather, check the campus website at umd.edu and snow phone line (301-405-SNOW) to see if classes are still being held.

6. The University is committed to maintaining an academic work environment free of sexual harassment for all faculty, staff and students. Sexual harassment diminishes individual dignity and impedes equal educational and employment opportunities. Sexual harassment will not be tolerated at the University; it is a violation of law and University policy. Individuals who engage in sexual harassment will be subject to disciplinary action. Please be advised that the University has procedures in place to report sexual harassment and correct it when it occurs. Students who have questions about sexual harassment or the University policy and procedures may call the Office of Judicial Programs.

7. This syllabus may be subject to change. Students will be notified in advance of important changes that could affect grading, assignments, etc.