

GWWS 8270: Theories of the Body: Biopolitics, Race, and Gender Graduate Seminar, Spring 2017

Tuesday 9:45 AM – 12:15pm
400 Ford Hall

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Course Description

Biopolitics as a conceptual apparatus used to describe forms of power that produce and manage populations through monitoring their “life” came into circulation largely through the work of Michel Foucault. Yet clearly biopolitics has expanded beyond Foucault; just as clearly, there is room for critical ethnic studies, gender studies, and transnational studies (among other disciplines) to push on the universalism of Foucault’s framework. How does the *bios*, the life, that is administered according to Foucault’s vision intersect with contemporary politics and capital in all its transnational forms? This course looks at biopolitics through the production of gendered, sexual and raced bodies across national and geographical borders. Building on a rich tradition of transnational feminist, queer Marxist, and critical race analysis of the exertion of power through life itself, we push at the limits of biopolitics as theory and ask the following questions: What bodies are deemed capable of being productive, how and where? What happens to bodies deemed unproductive or disposable? How do neoliberal ideas about individual sovereignty and freedom collide with national and global legal structures that decide on ownership of tissue, blood, bones, organs and cell lines? The seminar is interdisciplinary: we will read philosophy, migration studies, critical race theory, feminist theory, anthropology, sociology, queer and transgender studies, science and technology studies, cultural studies, fiction, political science, and economics.

Seminar Goals

The goal of this seminar is for us all to help each other with our work. “Work” here is broadly defined: for some it may mean dissertation research or qualifying exam preparation; for others this may mean theoretical or philosophical thinking; for others it may relate to understanding or transforming the particular social contexts we exist within.

As an instructor, my goal is to provide a through-line of thought relating to queer theory; to offer my own readings of particular theoretical trajectories where that is helpful; to offer my guidance on how to ask the right questions of the material we are reading; and where necessary, to offer guidance on discipline-specific skills. I also aim to provide a useful structure within which to manage both the demands of the university and your own desires for what we do here. Your goals are to explore the parameters of biopolitics and to show up with things to say. Practical goals include: to develop confidence in spoken intellectual debates; to develop a well-argued and comprehensive seminar paper; to aim for productive interdisciplinary research and writing yourself.

Expectations/Guidelines: Generally, I aim to generate a friendly atmosphere where so-called “stupid” questions can be asked as easily as “intelligent” ones; where the lines of

communication are open between participants; where we can challenge each other in a way that is generous and open rather than competitive. How this works out in practice will be for us to figure out as we go. This will be aided by your own collective willingness to speak, although it might be scary at first; and to speak to each other rather than addressing me as the instructor.

Reading Assignments

For each week I've organized a series of readings constellated around a given theme. Usually I will set around 4-5 chapters or articles. The readings may not look thematically related at first glance: this is a cue for you to think about how they might bounce off each other, work in contradictory methods/logics, or get to similar places through different means entirely.

Logistics: The readings will all be posted on Moodle in PDF form.

Reading and research strategies

In our reading for this seminar, we may find ourselves looking for perspectives on the question of how to read, how to do research, and how to formulate good questions that generate useful discussion. We also might spend a lot of time feeling anxious about the politics of "research" and how it is possible to hold a politics while we inhabit this compromised institution, the university. While we can use the methods we already know (basic humanities/social science research methods apply) this is also a philosophical and political question: how we read and to what end informs the way we interpret meaning, investment, application, praxis. So, here is a list of texts that address reading and research strategies, as well as some pointers on how to ask good questions. We'll set aside time in the first session to talk about these readings so that we remain in a dialogue about reading/research methods, and will return to this conversation throughout semester. All of these are suggestions but the first is required – please read it before the first class.

- Kyla Wazana Tompkins, "We Aren't Here To Learn What We Already Know," <http://avidly.lareviewofbooks.org/2016/09/13/we-arent-here-to-learn-what-we-know-we-already-know/>
- Colectivo Situaciones, "On the Researcher-Militant." Translated by Sebastian Touza. <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0406/colectivosituaciones/en#redir>
- Louis Althusser and Etienne Balibar, *Reading Capital* Chapter One: <http://www.marx2mao.com/Other/RC68i.html>
- Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses," *Social Text* 79, 22: 2 (2004), 101-115.

Assignments

Participation: 20% The most important aspect of this seminar is discovering and articulating your own insights from your reading and staying in open dialogue with others to collaboratively and collectively build greater insight. This process happens even during debate, disagreement, and all kinds of intense feelings, about the readings, myself, and other students. Transformative thinking often takes place in moments of uncomfortable conflict, messiness, and intense feelings. So instead of hiding these, I encourage you all to find ways to respectfully articulate your reactions and responses.

To do this safely, we also need to remain aware of the overall discussion dynamic: is it well-balanced? Is someone talking more than everyone else or dominating the discussion? If so, what strategies might undo this dynamic? (I.e. raising the issue; instigating a “stack” or speaking list; instigating a round robin where everyone speaks in turn around the room; anything else you can think of.) Do you and others feel comfortable enough to speak, even if it may be stressful? If not, what can you do to facilitate a more open-minded and respectful process of speaking and listening?

With this in mind, two people will take on the role of caretaker each class. Caretakers work in pairs/teams. Caretakers take the temperature of the room and are responsible for intervening when something needs to happen. Caretakers’ responsibilities include:

- actively ensuring that discussion kicks off (if no-one is talking, ask a question or make a comment to get things moving)
- actively ensuring that everyone is invited and welcome to share their perspectives
- actively ensuring that the seminar maintains an attitude of respect for everyone
- facilitating communication if differences of perspective become stressful
- encouraging engagement or breaking the ice if people in seminar are reluctant to speak.

Please sign up to be a caretaker on the form in Google Drive. Most people will do this twice. If you’re unable to make it to class, please let everyone know so we can find a replacement.

It is everyone's responsibility to help the caretakers do their job. And thus, the grade for caretaking will accrue to everyone except the two caretakers. That is to say, you will be graded on helping the caretakers for each day of seminar except for the days on which you are caretaker.

In Class Questions: 10%

- Each week, we aim to have someone write a discussion question for each different reading (and separate chapter)
- Some tips about writing questions:
 - Frame questions in two sentences or less (the more succinct the better).
 - Questions are designed to prime reading for others and to kick off class discussion.
 - Please refer to Tompkins’ article
- Please fill in the schedule by listing your name next to the readings
- We have 64 readings and 16 students, so everyone will write in-class questions 4 times
- Therefore, write your name next to four readings.
- Please don’t pick and choose too carefully – this is for practice condensing and thinking about writing you wouldn’t normally read as much as it’s for your own research purposes
- Post questions to the Moodle forum for each topic/week. Please post before Mondays @ 12pm before class so everyone has a chance to read.

Response Papers (4 total): 20%

For four of the readings (articles, chapters or whole books), you are required to write 4 2-3 page response papers in which you substantively engage some aspect of the text that you find particularly compelling. This is a practice run for literature reviews or a book review. Your

comments should include a generous summary of the author's critical contention and what they are trying to do; the body of work they are engaging with; how the author seeks to communicate this (methodology, particular sites they look at, voice, style); and your own comments and questions about the text. Response papers are due on January 31, February 28, March 28, April 18 (all Tuesdays). Please share your document with me on Google Drive on the day it's due.

Final Project: 50%

You are responsible for choosing a project to work on for this course that engages substantively with the critical/theoretical concepts explored in class and that fits into your larger research trajectory, examination preparation, or dissertation plan. You can choose from the following options or make up your own:

- An annotated bibliography
- A glossary or list of keywords for a field
- A journal article
- A dissertation prospectus or book proposal
- A literature review
- A conference paper
- A job talk

If you already have something to work with, you could convert one of these things into something larger: i.e. convert a conference paper or bibliography into a journal length article or dissertation chapter draft.

Final projects are due on Monday May 8. Please make an appointment to meet with me and discuss your project by the end of February.

Your grade for this project will be determined by the rigor with which you demonstrate your understanding of the assigned materials, the clarity of your analysis, the originality of your concepts, the strength of your research, the quality of your prose, along with correct spelling and grammar.

Attendance policy: You must attend all classes. If you're ill, please email me before class to let me know. The only other reasonable excuse for not coming to class is that you're attending a conference; otherwise, I'll have to mark you as absent and this will affect your grade.

Academic Integrity

Academic honesty is expected of all students in all examinations, papers, laboratory work, academic transactions and records. The possible sanctions include, but are not limited to, appropriate grade penalties, course failure (indicated on the transcript as a grade of E), course failure due to academic dishonesty (indicated on the transcript as a grade of XE), loss of registration privileges, disqualification and dismissal. For more information, see <http://provost.asu.edu/academicintegrity>.

Disability Policy Statement

Disability Accommodations: Students with disabilities who will require disability accommodations in this class are encouraged to make their requests at the beginning of the semester either during office hours or by appointment. Note: Prior to receiving disability accommodations, verification of eligibility from the Disability Resource Center (DRC) is required. Disability information is confidential.

Establishing Accommodations: Students who feel they will need disability accommodations in this class but have not registered with the Disability Resource Center (DRC) should contact DRC immediately on 612-626-1333. The DRC office is located on the first floor of the Macnamara Alumni Center. For additional information, visit <http://diversity.umn.edu/disability/home>.

Reading Assignments

Week 1 January 17 **The Politicization of Life**

- Michel Foucault, "From the power of sovereignty to power over life," lecture (17 March 1976), in Michel Foucault, *Society Must be Defended. Lectures at the College de France 1975-1976*, Mauro Bertani and Alessandro Fontana, eds, New York: Picador 2003, 239-264.
- Michel Foucault, "Right of death and power over life," *The History of Sexuality Volume One: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley. New York: Vintage, 1990.
- Nikolas Rose, "Politics and Life," in *The politics of life itself: biomedicine, power, and subjectivity in the twenty-first century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. Pp. 41-76.
- Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose, "Biopower Today," *BioSocieties* (2006), 1, 195-217.

Week 2 January 24 **Life and Capital: Modes of Production**

- Adam Smith, *The Wealth of Nations* (excerpts)
- Karl Marx, "Fragment on Machines," in *Grundrisse* (New York: Penguin, 1993), 690-712.
- Jason Read, "The Real Subsumption of Subjectivity," *The Micropolitics of Capital: Marx and the Prehistory of the Present* (Buffalo: SUNY Press, 2003), 103-149.
- Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, "Blackness and Governance," in *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (London: Minor Compositions, 2013).
- Optional: Cedric Robinson, Black Marxism

Week 3 January 31 **Micropolitics/Individuation** **Response paper #1 due**

- Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control." *October* 59 (1992), 3-7.
- Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, "Micropolitics and Segmentarity," *A Thousand Plateaus*.
- John D'Emilio, "Capitalism and Gay Identity," in Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, & Sharan Thompson (eds), *Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality*. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983.

Week 4 February 7 **Power Over Life: Sovereignty, Nation-State, Camp**

- Giorgio Agamben, Introduction and Part 3, *Homo Sacer: sovereign power and bare life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).
- Judith Butler, "Indefinite Detention," in *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004), 50-101.

- Carl Schmitt, excerpts from *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*. Trans. George Schwab. Boston: MIT Press, 1988.

Week 5 February 14
Indigeneity and resistance

- Gloria Anzaldúa, “The Homeland, Aztlán,” *Borderlands/La frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute Books, 1987), 1-13.
- Kēhaulani Kauanui, *Hawaiian Blood: Colonialism and the Politics of Sovereignty and Indigeneity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), Chs 1 & 2, “Racialized Beneficiaries and Genealogical Descendants.”
- Andrea Smith, excerpts from *Conquest: Sexual Violence and American Indian Genocide*. Boston: South End Press, 2005.
- Scott Morgensen, “The biopolitics of settler colonialism: right here, right now,” *Settler Colonial Studies* 1: 1 (2011), 52-76.

Week 6 February 21
The biopolitics of racialization

- Frantz Fanon, “The Fact of Blackness,” in *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 2008 [1952]), 82-109.
- Jin Haritaworn, *The Biopolitics of Mixing: Thai Multiracialities and Haunted Ascendancies* (London: Ashgate, 2011), Chapters One and Two.
- Jodi Melamed, *Represent and Destroy: Rationalizing Violence in the New Racial Capitalism* (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota Press, 2011), Chapter One.
- Jared Sexton, “People-of-Color-Blindness: Notes on the Afterlife of Slavery,” *Social Text* 28: 2 103 (2010), 31-56.
- Hortense Spillers, “Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book.”

Week 7 February 28
Necropolitics
Response paper #2 due

- Achille Mbembe, “Necropolitics.” *Public Culture* 15:1 (2003), 11-40.
- Elizabeth Povinelli, “The Child in the Broom Closet: States of Killing and Letting Die,” *South Atlantic Quarterly* 107: 3, 509–530.
- Lisa Cacho, Introduction, *Social Death: Racialized Rightlessness and the Criminalization of the Unprotected*. New York: NYU Press, 2013.
- Jasbir Puar, “Prognosis Time: Towards a geopolitics of affect, debility and capacity,” *Women and Performance* 19: 2 (2009), 161-172.
- Aren Aizura, “Trans feminine value and the limits of necropolitics,” in *Queer Necropolitics*

Week 8 March 7
Neoliberal border regimes

- Lisa Lowe, “The intimacies of four continents,” in Ann Laura Stoler, *Haunted by Empire: Geographies of Intimacy in North American History*.

- Angela Mitropoulos, "Notes on the Frontiers and the Borders of the Postcolony." *Sarai Reader 7* (2007), http://www.sarai.net/publications/readers/07-frontiers/372-379_angela.pdf
- Angela Mitropoulos, "The materialisation of race in multiculturalism," *Dark Matter 2* (2008), <http://www.darkmatter101.org/site/2008/02/23/the-materialisation-of-race-in-multiculturalism/print/>
- Mimi Thy Nyugen, Introduction, *The Gift of Freedom: War, Debt, and Other Refugee Passages*.
- Dimitris Papdopoulos, Vassilis Tsianos, and Niamh Stephenson, *Escape Routes: Control and Subversion in the 21st Century*. All of Part I, Sections 1 and 2, and Ch 12, "Autonomy of Migration."

Week 9 March 21
Theorizing biotech

- Melinda Cooper, *Life as Surplus: biotechnology and capitalism in the neoliberal era*, Chapter 1, "Life Beyond the Limits," and Chapter 3, "Preempting Emergence: The Biological Turn in the War on Terror." Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008.
- Nikolas Rose, Chapter Three, "An Emergent Form of Life?" in *The politics of life itself: biomedicine, power, and subjectivity in the twenty-first century*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.
- Kaushik Rajan, "Banking (on) Biologicals: Commodifying the global circulations of human genetic material." *Sarai Reader* (2002).

Week 10 March 28
Feminist biopolitics and reproductive labor
Response paper #3 due

- Leopoldina Fortunati, *The Arcane of Reproduction* (New York: Autonomedia, 1995). Chapters 1 (7-16), 7 (89-98) and 8 (99-104).
- Melinda Cooper and Catherine Waldby, "From reproductive work to regenerative labour," *Feminist Theory* 11: 1 (2011), 3-22.
- Silvia Federici, "The Accumulation of Labor and the Degradation of Women," *Caliban and the Witch* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004), 61-133.
- Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, "Women and the Subversion of the Community."

Week 11 April 4
Transnational reproductive labor

- Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Scattered Speculations on the Question of Value," in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Routledge, 1988), 154-75.
- Pheng Cheah, "Biopower and the New International Division of Labor," *boundary 2* 2007 34(1): 79-113.
- Neferti Tadiar, Chapter 3, "Domestic Bodies," in *Fantasy Production: Sexual Economies and Other Philippine Consequences for the New World Order* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong UP, 2004), 113-150.

- Martin Manalansan, "Queering the Chain of Care Paradigm," *Scholar and Feminist Online* 6: 3 (2008), http://www.barnard.edu/sfonline/immigration/manalansan_01.htm

Week 12 April 11
How Many Years of HIV?
Guest speaker John Greyson

- Theodore Kerr, "AIDS 1969: HIV, History, and Race," <http://drainmag.com/aids-1969-hiv-history-and-race/>
- Patton, Cindy. "Official Maps," in *Globalizing AIDS*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002.
- Vinh-Kim Nguyen, "Antiretroviral Globalism, Biopolitics and Therapeutic Citizenship," in Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier (eds), *Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics, and Ethics as Anthropological Problems* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2005),
- Eric Michaels, *Unbecoming*. Excerpts. Durham: Duke UP, 1990.
- Adam Geary, "Chapter 1: Rethinking AIDS in Black America," in *Anti-Black Racism and the AIDS Epidemic: State Intimacies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1-29.

Week 13 April 18
Reading affect
Response paper #4 due

- Patricia Clough, Introduction to *The Affective Turn*. Durham: Duke UP, 2007.
- Michael Hardt, "Affective Labor." PDF.
- Melissa Ditmore, "In Calcutta, Sex Workers Organize." In *The Affective Turn*.
- Brian Massumi, Introduction and Chapter One from *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham: Duke UP, 2002.
- Sara Ahmed, "The performativity of disgust," in *The cultural politics of emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004), 82-101.

Week 14 April 25
Queer biopolitics and necropolitics

- Jasbir Puar, "Homonationalism and biopolitics," and "The turban is not a hat: queer diaspora and practices of profiling," in *Terrorist Assemblages: homonationalism in queer times* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 166-202.
- Eric Stanley, "Near Life, Queer Death: overkill and Ontological Capture," *Social Text* 29: 2 (2011), 1-19.
- Jin Haritaworn and C. Riley Snorton, "Transsexual Necropolitics" in *The Transgender Studies Reader 2* (New York: Routledge, 2013),
- Andrea Smith, "Queer Theory and Native Studies: The Heteronormativity of Settler Colonialism," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16: 1-2 (2010), 41-68.
- Dean Spade and Craig Willse, "Freedom in a Regulatory State: Lawrence, Marriage, and Biopolitics," *Widener Law Review* 309 (2003-4).

Week 15 May 2

Political possibilities: undercommons, exodus, impossibility

- Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (London: Minor Compositions, 2013).
- “The Art of Flight: An Interview with Stanley Grelet and Yann Moulier Boutang,” *Rethinking Marxism: A Journal of Economics, Culture & Society* 13: 3-4 (2001), 227-235.
- Dean Spade, “Impossibility Now,” Video, *Scholar and Feminist Online* 2013, <http://vimeo.com/70656073>