Queering the Nature of Sexualized Identities
Dr. Evangeline (Vange) M. Heiliger

Class meets on MWF 1:30-2:20 p.m. in King 327
Office Hours: MW 2:30-3pm, MW 4:30-5PM, F by appointment
Need more time? Come by my office in King 141-E, sign up for an appointment on my door, or email me at: Evangeline.Heiliger@oberlin.edu

This course offers credit in CAST, GSFS, and ENVS

Course Description:
What does Over the Hedge have to do with environmental racism (Cynthia Hamilton)? What is learned by reading Queer Ecologies alongside Barbara Kingsolver's novel Prodigal Summer and Octavia Butler’s science fiction series Lilith’s Brood? In short, these texts ask us to consider what it means to have a racial(ized) and sexual(ized) identity that is shaped by our relationship with the environment. We will raise questions such as: How is nature gendered and sexualized? Why? In what ways are gender, race, sexuality, and other categories of identity mobilized around, or in opposition to, nature? We will investigate the discursive and practical connections made between women, queers, indigenous peoples, and nature, and chart the knowledge gained by queering our conceptions of nature and the natural.

This course re-examines relationships between sex, gender, queerness and sustainability through a critical engagement with a body of scholarship known as Queer Ecologies, e.g. feminist and queer scholarship on science, labor, popular culture, cultural and environmental preservation, politics and sexual and reproductive practices. Working from the premise that sexual(ized) identities are at least partially socially constructed, we will examine the ways that sexual identities have co-evolved through science and media. We will draw theoretical muscle from feminist science studies, LGBTIQ studies, media studies, critical race theory, crip theory, feminist theory, and queer theory. Students will read scholarship from the 1960s through the present, as well as analyze cultural artifacts such as web and print advertisements, television shows, films and fiction.

Course Objectives

- Students will refine interdisciplinary modes of learning and research
- Students will synthesize key theoretical and methodological approaches to the analysis of representations of race, gender, sexuality, class, and nature
- Students will demonstrate fluency in critical media literacy and potential to become active consumers of advertising and popular media
- Students will successfully navigate the scholarly research process (defining a problem, writing a literature review, finding scholarly sources, etc)
- Students will demonstrate proficiency in critical scholarly engagement, including the process of peer review and revision
**Course Disclaimer:** This course contains discussions and representations of an explicit nature. Think carefully before you enroll about your own comfort level—you will be required to discuss, read, and think critically about issues of sex and sexuality, race, disability, age, and gender. You will, on occasion, be confronted with sexually explicit images. Consider that issues and representations addressed in the course may not always involve modes of sexuality that you personally engage in and/or condone. Your enrollment in the course indicates that you have read the syllabus, including this disclaimer, and agree to participate in the seminar in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

**Course Requirements:**

Scholarly Engagement with Peers and Instructor: 50% (of total grade)

- Seminar Attendance and Participation: 10% (See attendance policy as well)
- Quiz Questions/Online Postings: 15%
- Presentations: 10%
- Peer Review Activities: 15%

Final Research Paper: 50% (of total grade)

- Research Proposal: 5%
- Annotated Bibliography: 15%
- First Draft: 10%
- Final Paper: 20%

**A Note on Attendance**

In order for you to fully participate in class activities, it is essential that you arrive to class on time and stay for the entirety of the class. If you are late for class or leave early for any reason, it is your responsibility to make sure I have not recorded you as absent. Absences will only be excused in extreme cases. Each student receives one no-questions-asked excused absence. All other absences will result in a reduction of your final grade by 2/3 of a letter grade for each missed class e.g. from “B” to “C+.” If you miss more than 5 scheduled classes, you will automatically fail the course.

**Practice Techno-Mindfulness**

Consider this class a temporary break in your day from email, Skype, IM, gchat, Facebook, Twitter, texting, gaming, surfing the internet, talking on the phone, or any other form of electronic entertainment or communication that is not expressly provided or permitted by your instructor. Should you find yourself unable to ignore your email/cell phone/social media sites during our class sessions, you will be marked as “absent” for that day’s class, and you will not receive participation points for the day.

**Active and Scholarly Engagement**

You are expected to attend every session and to participate actively in discussion. We will meet three times per week. Your thoughtful engagement in class discussions is key to achieving high performance. Absences will only be excused in extreme cases. If you miss more than 5 class sessions, you will automatically fail the course.
In order to earn full participation credit, you must come prepared to class with your readings, notes, and questions, and actively participate in discussion. Merely talking in class does not constitute active participation: I am expecting you to attempt to make connections between the readings, my lectures and your peers’ in-class and discussion board comments, as well as to media and advertising you see outside of class. This is a learned skill that requires practice, and you are not expected to do this perfectly from the beginning, but rather to do your best to improve over the course of ten weeks.

Each student will post a response to a Quiz Question on the class discussion board each week. Responses should be 500-750 words, and must actively engage the week’s readings and media, posing questions to the rest of the class and draw connections across the course materials. Postings will serve as a warm up for classroom discussion and help generate lively debate. **Students must post by noon on Monday of each week, with the exception of the 2nd day of class, Feb 5th, which is a Wednesday. You do not have to post a Quiz Question response for days you present in class.**

**Oral Presentation and Facilitation: 15 minutes**
You will sign up to present on one set of readings where you will synthesize, evaluate and debate the arguments and approaches made within two of the readings assigned for a particular class. The goal is to find a creative and compelling way to make the assigned readings comprehensible, relevant and provocative for your classmates. A portion of your presentation should be interactive, soliciting audience engagement. The presentation requires linking the readings to contemporary political and news debates, or cultural phenomena and should conclude by posing a few questions to generate discussion which you will facilitate for 10 minutes or so after your presentation concludes. Each group will present twice during the semester, beginning week 3. Turn in an outline of your presentation to me in class.

**Peer Review**
You will also have the opportunity to practice good reading and writing skills through in-class peer review. Early in the quarter, you will be divided into small writing groups where you will become familiar with one another’s research ideas and writing styles. You will regularly read one another’s writing in class, and will give written and oral feedback on one another’s writing and scholarly ideas. The purpose of this is to help generate ideas for your final papers, to learn how to become better writers and thinkers, to gain confidence in giving positive critical feedback and to become comfortable with the process of review and revision. You will have peer review assignments due Week 4, Week 8, and Week 12.

**Final Paper and Research Process**
Lastly, each student will produce a 15-20 page research paper on a topic related to the course. A research proposal will be required Week 4, an annotated bibliography is due Week 7, the first paper draft is due Week 11 and the final paper is due during the scheduled exam period. You will have the opportunity for written and oral feedback on all aspects of your research paper from both the instructor and your peer review group. Further instructions on each component will be given as the quarter progresses.
Course Materials:
Required texts for this class are available at the Campus Bookstore. They can also be easily acquired from online retailers. Many articles are available for free on the course website.

Required Texts:
Berry, Wendell. The Unsettling Of America: Culture & Agriculture
Butler, Octavia. Lilith’s Brood (LB)
Carson, Rachel. Silent Spring
Kingsolver, Barbara. Prodigal Summer (PS)
LaDuke, Winona. All Our Relations (LaDuke)
Mortimer-Sandilands, Catriona and Bruce Erickson. Queer Ecologies: Sex, Nature, Politics, Desire (QE)
Stein, Rachel. New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality and Activism (Stein)

Online Readings (OR) Found on the course website or in a course reader available for purchase

Optional Books (I recommend purchasing or borrowing one of the following as preparation for your final paper):

Clare, Eli. Exile & Pride: Disability, Queerness and Liberation
Daly, Mary. Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism
Giffney, Noreen, and Myra J. Hird. Queering the Non/Human (QNH)
hooks, bell. Belonging: A Culture of Place
hooks, bell. Where We Stand: Class Matters
Kingolver, Barbara. Animal, Vegetable, Miracle.
Mellor, Mary. Feminism & Ecology: An Introduction
Shiva, Vandana. Earth Democracy.

Useful Websites:
http://www.library.cornell.edu/olinuris/ref/research/skill28.htm
http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/614/01/

Academic integrity policy: The Student Conduct Code, and Student Guide to Academic Integrity, and other documented policies of the department, college, and university related to academic integrity will be enforced. For more details on college policies, please refer to The Office of the Dean of Students and the handout on Academic Integrity posted on the course website.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: I am committed to providing assistance to help you be successful in this course. Reasonable accommodations are available for students with documented disabilities. It is important to meet with Disability Services at the beginning of the semester to ensure that your accommodations are approved and in place to begin the semester successfully.

Changes to Syllabus: The instructor reserves the right to make changes to the syllabus in discussion with students and to meet the needs of the class.

4 of 7
Weekly Reading Schedule

Readings and discussion board postings are due before class.

Feb 3 / Day 1: Introduction to Sexualized Identities:
Introductions and Course Overview. Key terms.
In class readings
- “Finger Length Predicts SAT Scores”
- “Finger Length Predicts Aggressive Personalities”
- “Finger Length Ratios and Sexual Orientations”
- “Lesbian Lizards”
- “Gay Penguins Separated”
- “Leapin’ Lizards: Lesbian Reptiles Act Like Males”

Feb 5, 7 / Week 1: Feminism, Sustainability, Queer Ecology: Tilling Theories and Histories
Merchant, “Shades of Darkness: Race and Environmental History” (also online)
Gaard, Ch 1 “Toward a Queer EcoFeminism” (Stein) (also online)
Unger, Ch 2 “Women, Sexuality & EJ…” (Stein) (also online)
Butler, (Lilith’s Brood, Part I of Dawn: Womb)

Feb 10, 12, 14
Week 2: Racialized Genders, Queer Sex, and Troubling Reproduction
Butler, (Lilith’s Brood, Part II of Dawn: Family)

Background Reading for course (Choose TWO to read)
McIntosh, “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” (OR)
Mellor, Introduction (OR)
Mellor, Chapter 2: Women & The Environment (OR)
Smith, “Three Pillars of White Supremacy” (OR)
Serano, “Cissexual Privilege” (OR)

Feb 17, 19, 21
Week 3: Sustainability, Community, and Contradictions of Capitalism
Agyeman, Julian. Ch 2 “Sustainability Discourse and Sustainable Communities” (OR)
Berry, Ch 2 “Ecological Crisis as Crisis of Character” (Berry)
Shiva, Vandana. Selection from Earth Democracy (OR)
hooks, Ch 10 “White Poverty & The Politics of Invisibility” (OR)
Butler, (Lilith’s Brood, Part III of Dawn: Nursery)

Tentative: Library Sessions Feb 19, 21

Feb 24, 26, 28
Week 4: What’s Natural About Sex in Nature?
Alaimo, “Eluding Capture: The Science, Culture and Pleasure of ‘Queer’ Animals” (QE)
McWhorter, “Enemy of the Species” (QE)
Sturgeon, “Penguin Family Values: The Nature of Planetary Enviro Repro Values” (QE)
Butler, *Lilith’s Brood*, Part IV of Dawn: The Training Floor

*Research Proposal Draft (for peer review) due 1:30 p.m. Wednesday, Feb 26*

*Research Proposals Due 1:30 p.m. Friday, Feb 28*

**March 3, 5, 7**

**Week 5: Gender & Sexuality In Science/Through Media**

“Sex, Science & Stereotypes: Cultural Images of Science & Scientists” (OR)

Treck, “Sex, Science & Education” (OR)

Cohn, “Sex & Death in the Rational World of Defense Intellectuals” (OR)

Barbercheck, “Mixed Messages: Men & Women in Advertisements in Science” (OR)

Fox Keller, “Gender & Science: An Update” (OR)

Carson, *Silent Spring* (first half)

**March 10, 12, 14**

**Week 6: Agriculture, Culture, & Place**

*Potential Guest speaker on local organic farming*

Berry, Ch 3 “Ecological Crisis as Crisis of Agriculture” (Berry)

Berry, Ch 4 “Agricultural Crisis as Crisis of Culture” (Berry)

LaDuke, Ch 8 “Hawai‘i: The Birth of Land and its Preservation by the Hands of the People” (LaDuke)

LaDuke, Ch 6 “White Earth: A Lifeway in the Forest” (LaDuke)

hooks, selection from *Belonging* (OR)

Carson, *Silent Spring* (second half)

**March 17, 19, 21**

**No Class March 21**

**Week 7: Environmental Justice & the Power of Witness**

Agyeman, Introduction, Ch1 “Environmental Justice” (OR)

Kaaland, Ch 4 “Witness to Truth” (Stein)

hooks, Ch 10 “White Poverty & The Politics of Invisibility” (OR)

Tea, selections from “Without a Net” (OR)

Kingsolver, sections 1-3 (PS)

*Annotated Bibliographies due via email by 2 p.m. on March 21 (counts as midterm exam)*

**Spring Break March 22-30**

**March 31, April 2, 4**

**No Class March 31**

**Week 8: Gender & Sexuality in Literature & Pop Culture**

Stein, Ch 12 “Bodily Invasions” (Stein)

Halberstam, “Animating Revolt/Revolting Animation: Penguin Love, Doll Sex and…” (QNH)

Sturgeon, Ch 16 “The Power is Yours, Planeteers!: children’s enviro pop culture” (Stein)

Hogan, “Undoing Nature: Coalition Building as Queer Environmentalism” (QE)

Kingsolver, sections 4-9 (PS)

*Peer review of annotated bibliographies due to peers and professor by 1:30 p.m. April 4.*
April 7, 9, 11
Week 9: Gender & Sexuality in Science, Technology, & Politics
Lab visits
Di Chiro, Ch 9 “Producing ‘Roundup Ready®’ Communities? Human Genome …” (Stein)
Verchick, Ch 3 “Feminist Theory and Environmental Justice” (Stein)
Mellor, “Women, Biology and Nature in Feminist Thought” (OR)
Kingsolver, sections 10-13 (PS)

April 14, 16, 18
Week 10: Bodies, Breasts, and the Politics of Nurturing the Nation
Green Cleaning workshop
Berila, Ch 7 “Toxic Bodies: ACT UP’s disruption…” (Stein)
Knopf-Newman, Ch 9 “Public Eye: Investigating Causes of Breast Cancer” (Stein)
Di Chiro, “Polluted Politics? Confronting Toxic Discourse, Sex Panic, and Eco-Norm…” (QE)
Bailey, “On (dis)ableism” (OR).
"Nursing By Numbers: How Breastfeeding Helps the National Economy" (OR)
Kingsolver, sections 14-16 (PS)

April 21, 23, 25
Week 11: Representing Queerness Otherwise
Erickson, “‘fucking close to water’: Queering the Production of the Nation” (EQ)
Ingrim, ‘Fragments, Edges and Matrices: …Queering Landscape Ecology” (EQ)
Kuzniar, “ ‘I Married My Dog’: On Queer Canine Literature” (QNH)
Hayward, “Lessons From a Starfish” (QNH)
Kingsolver, sections 17-19 (PS)
Paper Drafts Due by 1:30 p.m. April 23

April 28, 30, May 2
Week 12: Rethinking Species and Sexuality
Azzarello, Ch 6 “Unnatural Predators: Queer Theory Meets Environmental Studies in Bram Stoker’s Dracula” (QNH)
Bernhardt-House, Ch 7 “The Werewolf as Queer, the Queer as Werewolf, and Queer Werewolves” (QNH)
Kendall, Ch 8 “The Face of a Dog: Levinasian Ethics and Human/Dog Co-evolution” (QNH)
Kingsolver, sections 20-24 (PS)
Peer reviews due to peers and professor by 1:30 p.m. April 30

May 5, 7, 9
Week 13: Conclusions, Evaluations, and Paper Presentations
Kingsolver, sections 25-31 (PS)
Presentations on paper topics May 5, 7, and if needed, May 9.

Final Papers are due during the scheduled exam time, Wednesday, May 14, 2014, between 9-11 a.m.