CAST 447: Queer Positions
Spring 2015
W 7:00 – 8:50
King 121

Michael Parker
Office: CAS Suite, Any location serving caffeine
Office Hours: W 6:00 – 7:00, or after class
Email: mike.parker@oberlin.edu; mgp25@case.edu
Website: mgparker.com

Required Texts:


All other required course materials will be available in .PDF format on the course website, mgparker.com

Course Description and Objectives:

What does it mean for queer to be a position? Certainly, the idea of queer possesses a political ethos such that staking or claiming queer as a sign of one’s identity involves claiming a political position. In works of queer theory, this political charge to queer can be symbolic, as in how queer identities offer an alternative form of sociality, or the political charge might be considered to reflect a potential for something radically different. Queer can also represent a form of politics which lies in opposition to heteronormative positions. While this political positioning of queer reflects its association with non-normative sexualities and gender identities, queer can also articulate other ways in which individuals relate to their environment. Thus, a queer position might be political, but it might also reference the position or orientation an individual has to space and culture. Queer could then be thought of as a directional term (historically the word, “queer” refers to that which is askew or slanted and of doubtful origin from the Latin and German roots respectively). Here a queer position might reference a relationship to another person, an object, a concept, or a particular aesthetic. Queer could also articulate a relationship to time and community. The positions of bodies to other bodies and the relationship not just to space but to others who share that space are important to this conception of queer.

This semester we will look at how queer is marked as a position politically; how queer involves positions, or orientations reflected through relationships between individuals and space and between individuals and culture; how queer identities position or privilege certain things (objects and ideas) over others; and how queer bodies are positioned from the outside. We will be looking to theoretical and philosophical accounts of queer politics, LGBTQIA identities, gender, phenomenology, critical race discussions, among others, in order to investigate not just queer as it is often conceptually conceived, but how queer as a position can also be contested and contingent. Through readings, course discussions, critical interventions, and research we will work through these ideas of queer positionality.
By the end of the seminar, students who demonstrate satisfactory completion of this course will fulfill the following objectives:

- to gain a background in the history and main critical components and ideas found in queer theory
- to understand the dominant conversations which circulate in queer theoretical works
- to develop an effective critical vocabulary of key terms
- to be able to participate and contribute to the broader conversation about queer concepts
- to identify the principal argument, claims, and support of a large theoretical work
- to develop strong critical reading skills
- to be able to clearly respond, through argumentative analysis, to works of theory and philosophy in written form
- to produce and present a review of a monograph or work of philosophy
- to be able to develop and produce a lengthy research project which takes up a larger point from works of queer theory in relation to another genre or body of work

Course Policies:

In Class Discussion: Because we will be approaching texts and subject matter which are, at times, controversial or which might discuss material out of alignment with experience, our in class discussions must maintain an element of civility. Class discussion should accommodate all viewpoints. This means that the seminar will be held in an atmosphere of mutual tolerance and respect.

Late/Missed Class Work: I will not accept late work unless it can be attributed to a valid cause for the lateness. I realize many situations arise over the course of the semester that are beyond our control, and I am more than amenable to discussing extensions with you. However, these extensions need to be discussed more than 24 hours before the due date for an assignment. Also, because this course requires a good deal of in class participation and discussion, and because you will be working with classmates routinely, it would be in your best interest (as well as your grade’s best interest) to come to class having completed any assignments due in class.

Late Papers: I will only grant paper extensions that result from serious difficulties (illness, death, or other tragedies). Paper extensions must be requested in advance.

Attendance: Late arrivals will count as one half of an absence. This means that arriving late twice constitutes a full missed class. You are allowed to miss two full classes without an excuse. Missing more than two classes without appropriate documentation will reduce your grade by a full letter (A to B, B to C, and so on).

Revisions: As this course is dedicated to writing, and revision is a large part of the writing process, your first two papers will be open to revision. Please note that revision does not mean only correcting small-scale grammatical concerns. Revision means looking at the entire piece of writing and retooling, reworking, sometimes rewriting the entire piece. I will grade these revisions as a new essay and will then average the grades from the revision and the first essay. You will have two weeks to turn in any revisions to me after I have returned an essay.
Paper Formatting: All written work (aside from in class assignments) must be typed, double-spaced, in 12 point Times New Roman font. Each paper will include one inch margins on each side.

Conferences: I am available to meet during my office hours or at any other time that our schedules allow.

Electronic Devices: I am open to the use of electronic devices in class. If you use an iPad, Kindle, laptop, or other device to house your books and .pdf files, please bring these devices along as we will be working closely with the texts during class. The use of any other electronic device is not allowed. Use of electronic devices not a part of our coursework will greatly influence your participation grade for that class session.

Accommodations for Students with Disabilities: During the semester, I am happy to meet (in office hours or by appointment) with any and all students enrolled in this course. If you have a documented learning or other disability, please contact me as soon as possible so that we can discuss appropriate accommodations.

CR/NE or P/NP: If you are taking this course CR/NE or P/NP, you must fulfill all course obligations and complete all assignments in order to receive credit for the course.

Honor Code: This course will follow the policies described in the Oberlin College Honor Code and Honor System. Please include the statement, “I affirm that I have adhered to the Honor Code in this assignment,” in all written work. If you have any questions about academic honesty, citation, or the relationship of the Honor Code to your work in this course, please contact me.

Assignments and Grading:

Response Papers: (10%) Over the course of the semester you will write 5 two page, double-spaced response papers. Response papers respond to one or more ideas found within the reading for the class; they summarize and evaluate an idea; they also ask questions which will assist in spurring class discussion. Response papers are due by 6 pm on the Tuesday before class via email.

Participation: (10%) Participation includes arriving on time for class to begin and attending class. In class participation, a significant portion of the work we will be doing, will be assessed based on active engagement with the material in class, obvious demonstration of having read the material, and level of preparedness.

Essay 1: (15%) For the first essay, you will write a 5-6 pp. which responds to the antisocial thesis in Queer Theory. More information on this essay will be forthcoming.

Essay 2: (15%) For the second essay, you will write a 5-6 pp. which reviews a selected monograph. In class, we will be reading selections from monographs. For this assignment, you will read one entire monograph and then respond to and review the work.
**Final Research Essay:** (50 %) The research project, 12-15 pp. in length, is open in terms of topic. You will be allowed to explore concepts approached in class or those you find within additional reading. This assignment allows you to explore theory in relation to literature, art, music, film, etc., or any other source. The assignment will be scaffolded and will include:

- **Proposal** (5%) of 2-3 pp. in which you will outline your central research question or problem, articulate your argument, what sources and resources you intend to use, and the potential take away from the paper.
- **Annotated Bibliography** (5%) of at least 10 sources in which you will identify, summarize, evaluate, and connect sources together in half-page annotations.
- **Paper** (40%)

**Deadlines:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Due Date</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4 March 2015</td>
<td>Essay 1</td>
<td>Midnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 March 2015</td>
<td>Proposal Due</td>
<td>Midnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 April</td>
<td>Essay 2</td>
<td>Midnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 April</td>
<td>Annotated Bibliography</td>
<td>Midnight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 May</td>
<td>Final Research Paper</td>
<td>9 pm</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Course Schedule:** The schedule is subject to change. All changes made will be done with plenty of advance notice and with the knowledge of all parties involved.

4 February, Week 1: Queer Theory: Past and Recent Past (72 pages)


11 February, Week 2: Queer Political Positions: the Antisocial Thesis (98 pages)


18 February, Week 3: Queer Political Positions: Responses to the Antisocial Thesis (46 pages)


Snediker, Michael.
25 February, Week 4: Queers, Norms, and Exceptionalism (95 pages)


4 March, Week 5: Queer of Color Critique (84 pages)


11 March, Week 6: Queer of Color Critique (51 pages)


18 March, Week 7: Gay Sex, Queer Sex (79 pages)


25 March. Week 8: Spring Break

1 April, Week 9: Queer Orientations (178 pages)


8 April, Week 10: Queer Performances (42 pages)

Various photographs and clips of drag king and queen performances.

15 April, Week 11: Trans Orientation (98 pages)


22 April, Week 12: Queer Times and Spaces (70 pages)


29 April, Week 13: Queer Archives, Queer Feelings (75 pages)


6 May, Week 14: bringing it all together