

TH332-30 Gender and Sexuality in Performance and Contemporary Culture

24/25

Department

SCAPVC - Theatre and Performance Studies

Level

Undergraduate Level 3

Module leader

Bryony White

Credit value

30

Module duration

18 weeks

Assessment

100% coursework

Study location

University of Warwick main campus, Coventry

Description

Introductory description

Gender and Sexuality in Performance and Contemporary Culture examines the role of gender and sexuality in contemporary culture, primarily in performance, theatre, film, TV and literature. As such, this module analyses how performance and other forms of contemporary cultural production engage with, reveal, challenge, deconstruct, and resist dominant norms of gender and sexuality. Through seminar discussion and practical exploration, students will become familiar with important theory and scholarship in queer, trans and feminist studies, Black feminism and Marxist feminism. Students will develop a stronger critical analytic of how gender, sexuality, as well as race, and class, inform and are informed by our current political climate. In Term One, we will focus predominantly on grounding ourselves in how key terms such as gender, sexuality, and feminism have evolved and are being continuously redefined. Rather than organising the module through key feminist movements, we will begin the module by considering how such periodisation and narrativisation obfuscate wider feminist struggles. Instead, we will look to thinkers, theorists, artists, and activists who start from the basis that the unequal balance of power in relation to gender always exists at the intersection of other forms of oppression such as class, sexuality, race, and disability. As such, across both terms, we will look at feminist and queer methodologies,

the relationship between gender, sexuality, and colonialism, and consider considering feminism, gender, and sexuality as they intersect with questions of sex, work, labour, capital, and reproduction. In the module, we will also animate key questions at the heart of queer theory and trans studies through more thematic topics and ideas, for example, desire, porn, historiography and the archive, trauma, heteronormativity, and care. We will think about the AIDs crisis, questions of embodiment, and how bodies come to make meaning in the world. As such, we will think about the historical violences that occur in the gendering and racialisation of the body, especially as this intersects with questions of nationhood and chattel slavery, medicine and psychiatry, archive and record, and labour and work.

Module aims

The principal aim of the module is to explore the politics of gender and sexuality through the lens of performance and contemporary culture. Together we will ask what performance as both a practice and a methodology can teach us about the constructions, operations, and power relations of gender and sexuality. In other words, how can performance studies help us to 'read' the subject of gender and sexuality, and how can performance as a practice intervene in its dominant systems?

To analyse and understand the mutually constitutive relationship between the construction, production, regulation and policing of gender and sexuality, and contemporary society, politics, power and culture.

To understand how theatre, theory, performance, and art reflect and contribute to shifts in circulating discourses of power. Starting with an understanding of key terms such as gender, feminism, and sexuality, moving through to an engagement with queer and trans histories, theories and practices of desire and sex, and discussions of reproductive labour and family abolition, students will come to engage with a wide range of performances, plays, visual culture, and theory.

Outline syllabus

This is an indicative module outline only to give an indication of the sort of topics that may be covered. Actual sessions held may differ.

Term 1—

Week 1: Gender & Sexuality

Week 2: Performance & Contemporary Culture

Week 3: Bodies & Performativity

Week 4: Colonialism & Gender

Week 5: History & Sexuality

Week 7: Sexuality & Blackness

Week 8: Crisis & Care

Week 9: Protest & Power

Week 10: Creative Project Consultations

Term 2—

Week 1: Reproduction & Abolition

Week 2: Sex & Work

Week 3: Gender & Capital
Week 4: Transness & Kinship
Week 5: Sex & Pornography
Week 7: Disability & Normativity
Week 8: Trauma & Violence
Week 9: Sex & Power
Week 10: Essay Workshop & Writing Skills

Learning outcomes

By the end of the module, students should be able to:

- Students will have discussed the ways in which contemporary artists, writers and filmmakers have explored the relationships between gender, sexuality and power in relation to their historical and cultural contexts.
- Students will have analysed a range of art, performance, tv and film in order to identify and explore ways in which dominant norms around gender and sexuality have been challenged and resisted, and will have explored how performances of gender and sexuality contribute to an understanding both concepts in terms of the agency of bodies in the social world.
- Students will have developed an advanced understanding of the relationship between performance, cultural production and gender and sexuality through historical, theoretical, philosophical, artistic, and literary research. They will have a keen sense of the political and ethical demands of representing gender and sexuality and demonstrate a thoughtful and imaginative response to these challenges in the creative project and essay.
- Students will have gained a rigorous understanding of key concepts, terms, themes and movements covered in the module such as sexuality, labour, gender, reproduction, porn, desire, heteronormativity, and homonormativity.
- Students will develop their skills and academic training during this module. They will further develop their ability to engage critically and analytically from different theoretical perspectives. They will explore theoretical concerns through practice, and vice versa, and will be able to synthesise findings in practical and written tasks. By the module's conclusion, students will have furthered their ability to interpret research and creative practice.
- Students will have developed the advanced ability to utilise research tools and to articulate the relationship between critical theory and creative practice. They will also have enhanced their library and IT skills via detailed independent research. They will also be able to contribute research to small groups in effective presentations, to evaluate visual evidence and to develop advanced confidence in the ability to communicate complex material.
- Students will have developed a number of personal skills in the course of this module. These include using personal initiative, identifying and evaluating personal learning strategies that are self-critical as much as self-reflective. Students will also develop group collaboration skills, including the ability to give and receive constructive critical feedback. Finally, they will develop their ability to think laterally and demonstrate originality in problem solving, to express and communicate creative ideas and images, and the ability to initiate and sustain creative work, both group and solo.

Indicative reading list

ACT UP New York Archival Records
Moonlight (dir. Barry Jenkins) (2016)
Selina Thompson, Salt, (2021)
Rent (dir. Chris Columbus) (2005)
Michaela Coel, I May Destroy You (2020)
Mierle Laderman Ukeles, Washing/Tracks/Maintenance: Outside (1973)
Cassils, Becoming an Image (2012–Present)
Queer Eye [Season 4, Episode 2: 'Disabled but Not Really] (2019)
The Prostitutes of Lyon Speak [Les Prostituées de Lyon Parlent], (1975)
Torrey Peters, Detransition, Baby (2021)
Phyllis Christopher, Dark Room: San Francisco, Sex and Protest, 1988–2003 (London: Book Works, 2022)

Angela Davis, Women, Race and Class (London, UK: Penguin Books, 2019 [1983])
John D'Emilio, 'Capitalism and Gay Identity', in Powers of Desire: The Politics of Sexuality (eds: Ann Snitow, Christine Stansell, & Sharan Thompson) (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983)
Silvia Federici, 'Wages Against Housework [1975]', in Revolution at Point Zero: Housework, Reproduction, and Feminist Struggle (2nd Edition), (Oakland, CA: PM Press, 2020)
Kay Gabriel, 'Gender as Accumulation Strategy', Invert Journal.
Saidiya Hartman, Lose Your Mother: A Journey Along the Atlantic Slave Route (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008)
Robert McGruer, Crip Theory: Cultural Signs of Queerness and Disability (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006), pp. 171–198.
Sarah Schulman, The Gentrification of the Mind: Witness to a Lost Imagination (Berkeley, London and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2012)
Christina Sharpe, In the Wake: On Blackness and Being (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2016)

Research element

The assignments will be informed by the student's own research.

Subject specific skills

See learning outcomes

Transferable skills

Research skills
Analytical skills
Writing and comprehension skills
Collaboration and communication skills
Presentation skills
Practical performance skills

Study

Study time

Type	Required
Seminars	18 sessions of 2 hours (12%)
Private study	264 hours (88%)
Total	300 hours

Private study description

No private study requirements defined for this module.

Costs

No further costs have been identified for this module.

Assessment

You must pass all assessment components to pass the module.

Assessment group A4

	Weighting	Study time
Essay	60%	
A 4000 word written essay. Students will have the option to select a question from a list produced by the tutor or develop their own.		
Project-based assessment	40%	
Students will work on solo or small group practical projects. These will be between 20 and 30 minutes in duration and may take a range of forms.		

Feedback on assessment

Written feedback followed by face-to-face meetings.

Availability

Courses

Course availability information is based on the current academic year, so it may change.
This module is Optional for:

- Year 4 of UENA-QW35 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies with Intercalated Year
- UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 3 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 3 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
- Year 4 of UTHA-W422 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Core option list B for:

- UFRA-R1W4 Undergraduate French with Theatre Studies
 - Year 4 of R1W4 French with Theatre Studies
 - Year 4 of R1W4 French with Theatre Studies

This module is Option list A for:

- UTHA-W421 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 3 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
 - Year 3 of W421 Theatre and Performance Studies
- Year 4 of UTHA-W422 Undergraduate Theatre and Performance Studies (with Intercalated Year)

This module is Option list B for:

- Year 3 of UTHA-QW34 Undergraduate English and Theatre Studies