

**WILLIAMS COLLEGE**  
**Religion 278 – Gender, Religion and the State**

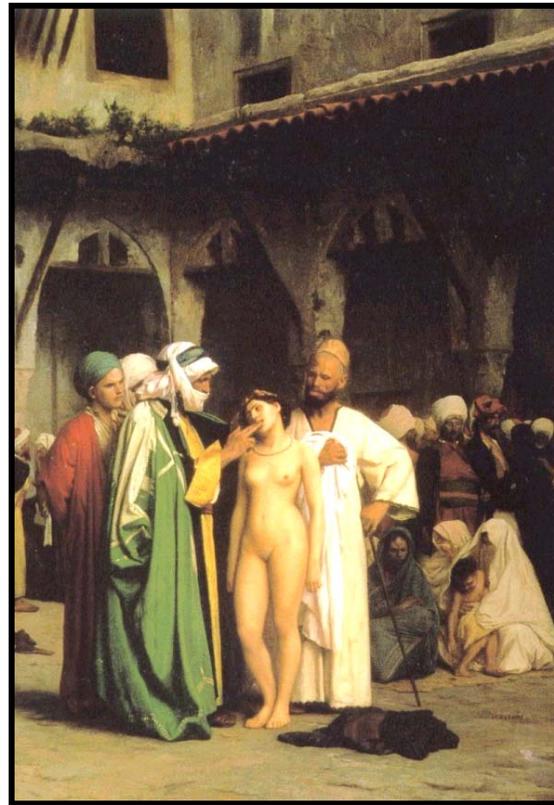
**Fall 2005**

**Monday/Thursday 1:10-2:25PM (Physics 113)**

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Office Hours: M/Th 2:30-4:30pm & by appt.

Issues of gender and religion are often heavily contested in debates on the appropriate uses of state power. But what is *power* and under what conditions is it susceptible to analysis? Can current debates on questions of sexuality and the law be understood without reference to religion? Are race and class relevant to these debates? And what might be the implications of exporting Euro-American understandings of oppression and progressive politics to Asian and African contexts?

This course will challenge you to think critically about the nature of power and the possibility of resistance and/or subversion. Although the course is ethnographic in nature – focusing on examples from Egypt, India, Indonesia and the United States – our discussion will be driven by a series of critical questions to which we shall return each week in addressing our regional foci.



*The slave market*, by Jean-Léon Gerome (1824-1904).

We shall, for instance, examine various accounts of state-sanctioned gender inequality and heteronormativity, and discuss possible explanations for these phenomena. We'll ask whether religion is responsible for oppression. Or, alternatively, whether it might be explained more fruitfully through reference to broader patterns of culture and history. When is resistance a possibility? And how might it be configured? We shall consider the question of whether our presuppositions regarding the nature of 'gender' and 'sexuality' – as well as 'religion' and 'the state' – can really be exported unproblematically to all other places and times. In grappling with these and other questions, our approach will necessarily be comparative. However, we shall not only compare specific articulations of gender, religion and the state, but we will also ask how our understanding of these very concepts has been transformed as a result of that engagement.

**Course objectives**

This course is designed to facilitate your development of (1) a critical understanding of the ways in which gender, religion and the state have been articulated in four specific regional contexts; (2) an awareness of the historical particularity of Euro-american presuppositions regarding the nature of gender and sexuality and how they are related to religion and the state; (3) and an appreciation for some of the philosophical and ethical implications of recognizing the possibility of radical difference. Finally, you will be expected to reflect on how your work on this course has – or has not – had an effect on your thinking about the place of gender and religion in contemporary society.

## Course requirements

- Students are expected to be present and prepared to participate in every class. Please **contact the instructor ahead of time** if you will not be in class. Only two unexcused absences are allowed.
- This course is a seminar and, as such, **active participation is a must**. Each student will be asked to collaborate with another member of the class to lead the discussion in at least one of our sessions during each half of the course. The allocation of sessions will depend in part on the number of students in the class. 25% of your final grade will be determined by the scholarly rigor and creativity with which you participate and lead in-class discussion. This will include your contributions to Blackboard. Further details on leading in-class discussion and posting to Blackboard are given below.
- Two short **written response assignments** will make up 10% of your final grade. Details will be distributed well ahead of time.
- One **midterm paper**, due October 28<sup>th</sup> at 5pm. Details forthcoming – 30% of final grade.
- One **final paper and presentation**. The assignment will be distributed after the midterm and will constitute 35% of your final grade.

## Leading the discussion:

You will be paired up with another member of the class to lead the discussion in one or more of our class sessions during each half of the term. The questions you decide to raise in relation to your topic will be largely up to you. However, you are also encouraged to address the questions listed in the syllabus. If this is the first seminar you've taken, it is recommended that you meet with the instructor ahead of time for general assistance or to clarify any difficulties you may be having with the reading. You and your seminar partner will be expected **to post a series of issues and questions for discussion to Blackboard by noontime on the day before the class meets**. Only one posting is required between you and your discussion partner. And the quality and punctuality of your submission will be a factor in determining your marks for participation. To submit your post to the Blackboard site, click the button labeled << Discussion >> and then follow the link to << Add a New Thread >>. Again, the format is largely up to you. A few paragraphs – between 500 and 750 words – will suffice. But you're also welcome to add links to additional online sources or to upload material of your own. In short, get creative! The idea is to get the ball rolling ahead of time so that when we arrive in class we'll be ready to have an engaged and informed conversation.

## Two comments and/or questions to Blackboard each week:

Every student – with the exception of the discussion leaders – will also be expected to post a **brief comment or question** to Blackboard before each session meets. You may comment directly on the readings or, alternatively, on the post from the discussion leaders for that day's session. Again, the idea is to get the ball rolling before we meet in class. The thoughtfulness and creativity of your post will contribute to your overall marks for participation. And the emphasis is on quality rather than quantity, so a well-written sentence or two is preferable to a page-long ramble.

## Library resources:

A broad range of reference materials is available in the library. A good place to start is the online *Introduction to women's and gender studies background information* at <http://www.williams.edu/library/subjectguides/wgs/101/background.html> and the *Gay and Lesbian Resources Library Search Guide* at <http://www.williams.edu/library/subjectguides/wgs/gls.html>. If you would like additional help in finding resources, you may contact either the instructor or Rebecca Ohm (Rebecca.Ohm@williams.edu), the library research liaison for the Department of Religion, for assistance.

### Course books to be purchased at the Water Street Bookstore

1. Butler, J. (1999 [1990]) *Gender trouble; Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York & London: Routledge.
2. Foucault, M. *The history of sexuality, An introduction*. New York: Vintage Books.
3. el Saadawi, N. (1997) *Woman at point zero*. London & New York: Zed Books.
4. von Sacher-Masoch, L. *Venus in Furs*. New York etc.: Penguin Classics.

### Supplemental readings

There is also a **Supplemental Reader (SR)** for the course – in two parts – which is available from the Departmental Office in Stetson Hall. Part One is available immediately; Part Two will be made available later in the semester. The contents of the reader include the following:

1. Mernissi, F. (1987) Excerpt on ‘The Prophet and Hadith’, from *The veil and the male elite*. Reading, MA etc: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company Inc. (pp. 25-32)
2. Humphreys, R.S. (1999) ‘Women in public life; Islamic perspectives, Middle Eastern realities’. *Between memory and desire; The Middle East in a troubled age*. Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, pp.204-26.
3. Levinas, E. (1982) ‘Translator’s introduction’, ‘The face’ and ‘Responsibility for the Other’. In: *Ethics and infinity*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University press, pp. 1-15, 82-101.
4. Bahgat, H. (2004) ‘Egypt’s virtual protection of morality’. *Middle East Report*. 230: 22-5.
5. Human Rights Watch (2004) Pages 1-48 & 129-43, ‘A time of torture; The assault on justice in Egypt’s crackdown on homosexual conduct’.
6. Brief excerpt from Halperin, D.M. (2002) *How to do the history of homosexuality*. Chicago: CUP. (2-4).
7. Dunne, B. (1998) ‘Power and sexuality in the Middle East’. *Middle East Report*. Issue 206: 8-11, 37.
8. Massad/Schmitt debate in *Public culture*. 14(2): 361-85; 15(3): 587-91, 593-4.
9. von Krafft-Ebing, R. *Psychopathia sexualis* (pp. 1-15; 32-6; 86-8).
10. von Krafft-Ebing, R. *Psychopathia sexualis* (pp. 186-93).
11. Kafka, F. (2000 [1915]) ‘The metamorphosis’. *The metamorphosis, In the penal colony, and other stories*. Trans. J. Neugrochel. New York etc: Simon & Schuster.
12. Gleason, P. (1983) ‘Identifying identity: A semantic history’. *The journal of American history*. 69(4): 910-31.
13. Anonymous (1990) ‘Queers read this; I hate straights’. Pamphlet reprinted in: M. Blasius and S. Phelan (eds) *We are everywhere; A historical sourcebook for gay and lesbian politics*. London & New York: Routledge. (773-80).
14. Stanton, G.T. & Maier, B. (2004) Excerpt [pp.11-17 & 131-56] from *Marriage on trial: The case against same-sex marriage and parenting*. InterVarsity Press.
15. Mecca, T.A. (2004) ‘It’s all about class’. In: M.B. Sycamore (ed) *That’s revolting! Queer strategies for resisting assimilation*. New York: Publishers Group West.
16. Jindal, P. (2004) ‘Sites of resistance or sites of racism?’. In: Sycamore (ed), *as above*.

17. Willse, C. & D. Spade (2005) 'Freedom in a regulatory state? Lawrence, marriage and biopolitics'. *Widener Law Review*. 11(2): 309f.
18. Excerpts from *The Kāma Sūtra*, trans. A. Daniélou. (pp. 1-6; 139-44; 197-214).
19. Excerpts from *The law code of Manu (Mānavadharmasāstra)*, trans. P. Olivelle. (pp. xxxviii-xlv, 13-48, 85-105, 149-71).
20. Mani, L. (1989) 'Contentious traditions: The debate on *sati* in colonial India'. In: K. Sangari & S. Vaid (eds) *Recasting women; Essays in Indian colonial history*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, pp. 88-126.
21. Tully, 'The rewriting of the Ramayan', from *No full stops in India*.
22. Thapar, R. (2003) Excerpt from *Cultural pasts: Essays in Early Indian History*. Oxford: OUP.
23. Sinha, M. (1995) Introduction and Ch.1, Colonial masculinity: The 'manly Englishman' and the 'effeminate Bengali' in the late nineteenth century. Manchester: MUP.
24. MacMunn, G.F. (1933) 'Darkest India', from *The underworld of India*. London: Jarrolds.
25. Viridi, J. (2003) Chapters 1 & 2 from *The cinematic imagination: Indian popular films as social history*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. (pp. 26-86)
26. Patel, G. (2002) 'On fire: Sexuality and its incitements'. In R. Vanita (ed) *Queering India; Same-sex love and eroticism in Indian culture and society*. New York & London: Routledge, pp.222-33.
27. Bachman, M.. (2002) 'After the fire'. In R. Vanita (ed) *Queering India; Same-sex love and eroticism in Indian culture and society*. New York & London: Routledge, pp.234-43.
28. Hesselink, L. (1987) 'Prostitution: A necessary evil, particularly in the colonies'. In: E. Locher-Scholten & A. Niehof (eds) *Indonesian women in focus*. Leiden: KITLV, pp.205-24.
29. Francis, G. (translated by H. Aveling, 1988) *The story of Nyai Dasima*.
30. Kartini, Introduction & 4 letters from *Letters from a Javanese Princess*. (pp. vii-xviii, 142-8, 238-9, 275, 297-9)
31. Suryakusuma, J.I. (1996) 'The state and sexuality in New Order Indonesia'. In: L.J. Sears (ed) *Fantasizing the feminine in Indonesia*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 92-119.
32. Sunindyo, S. (1998) 'When the earth is female and the nation is mother: Gender, the armed forces and nationalism in Indonesia'. *Feminist review*, 58(1): 1-21.
33. Fox, R. (n.d.) Imagining the *agamic* audience: Hindu authority and its televisual addressees in late New Order Indonesia.
34. Oetomo, D. (1996) 'Gender and sexual orientation in Indonesia'. In: L.J. Sears (ed) *Fantasizing the feminine in Indonesia*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp.259-69.
35. Boellstorff, T. (2004) 'Zines and zones of desire: Mass-mediated love, national romance, and sexual citizenship in gay Indonesia'. *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 63(2) 367-402.
36. Murray, A.J. (1999) 'Let them take ecstasy'. In: *Female desires; Same-sex relations and transgender practice across cultures*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 139-56.

## COURSE SCHEDULE

**Thursday,  
September 8**                      **Course introduction**

**Monday,  
September 12**                    **The state of gender:  
Women at point zero**

In this first full session, we shall begin with a series of questions regarding the position of women in Islamic societies. Does el Saadawi's novel describe a universal phenomenon? Might Islam be to blame for Firdaus' suffering? Or, alternatively, can her predicament be explained in terms of a more general patriarchy rooted in the norms and history of Middle Eastern culture? Or, again, is the answer to be found somewhere else entirely? We'll consider these and related questions through a reading of the first half of *Woman at point zero*, and discuss the nature of 'the state' as dispersed into its moments of assertion.

Opening questions:

1. What kinds of power figure in Firdaus' account of her life?
2. How is Firdaus positioned as a subject through her involvement in these relationships of power?
3. Considering the readings from Mernissi & Humphreys, can Firdaus' subjugation – and the subjugation of women in the story more generally – be explained through reference to Islam? Middle Eastern culture? A more universal patriarchal authoritarianism? Or perhaps something else entirely?
4. How might we go about studying power from a critical scholarly perspective?

Reading:

- Mernissi, F. (1987) Excerpt on 'The Prophet and Hadith', from *The veil and the male elite*. Reading, MA etc: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company Inc. (pp. 25-32)
- Humphreys, R.S. (1999) 'Women in public life; Islamic perspectives, Middle Eastern realities'. *Between memory and desire; The Middle East in a troubled age*. Berkeley etc.: University of California Press, pp.204-26.
- el Saadawi, N. (1983) *Woman at point zero*. London & New York: Zed Books; Preface & pp. 1-51.

Background reading:

Brief excerpt on Egyptian history from *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, accessible both on the Blackboard site as well as directly at <http://www.search.eb.com/ebi/article?tocId=200016>.

**Tuesday,  
September 13**                    **Film: Dayereh ('The Circle')**  
   Pizza and a movie.  
**Preston Room, Stetson Hall at 7pm**

**Thursday,  
September 15**

**About face:**

**On the possibility of turning away**

In conjunction with our reading of *Woman at point zero*, we'll think through the ethical implications of Otherness implicit in the *face-to-face relationship* as discussed by Levinas. Having seen a similarly dire situation for women as depicted through Iranian cinema (*The Circle*), we shall return to the question of how one is to explain the subjectification of women as described by el Saadawi.

Opening questions:

1. What is the significance of 'the eyes' in el Saadawi's novel? And how might this be understood in terms of Levinas' account of Otherness?
2. In the end, was Firdaus successful in subverting the powers to which she was subjected?
3. Under what conditions is power susceptible to resistance and /or subversion?
4. What similarities did you notice between the Egyptian novel *Woman at point zero* and the Iranian film *The Circle*? How might you explain these similarities?

Reading:

el Saadawi, N. *Woman at point zero*, pp. 51-108.

Levinas, E. (1982) 'Translator's introduction', 'The face' and 'Responsibility for the Other'. In: *Ethics and infinity*. Pittsburgh: Duquesne University press, pp. 1-15, 82-101.

**Monday,  
September 19**

**Dangerous living:**

**On coming out in Egypt**

This session will begin with a screening of John Scagliotti's critically acclaimed documentary **film**, *Dangerous living: Coming out in the developing world*. In the remaining time, we shall frame a series of critical questions pertaining to Islam, the state and same-sex relationships.

Reading:

Bahgat, H. (2004) 'Egypt's virtual protection of morality'. *Middle East Report*. 230: 22-5.

Human Rights Watch (2004) Pages 1-48 & 129-43, 'A time of torture; The assault on justice in Egypt's crackdown on homosexual conduct'.

**Thursday,  
September 22**

**The invention of tradition?**

**Islam and 'The Gay International'**

Taking the case of 'the Cairo 52' as our point of departure, we shall examine a series of common presuppositions regarding the nature of same-sex desire. We shall ask, for instance: Is homosexuality rooted in one's biological make-up? Or, alternatively, is it culturally determined? What are the implications

of believing that involvement in a homosexual relationship is an affront to God's will? Or, alternatively, that it is a natural part of His/Her/Its creation? From a critical perspective, can 'homosexuality' itself even be considered a unified phenomenon? Or is it simply a conventional – and broadly modern Euro-american – way of talking about a range of practices that are otherwise unrelated? We shall aim to address these and related questions in our discussion.

Opening questions:

1. What are the primary points of disagreement between Massad and Schmitt? And do you agree with one or the other of them?
2. What does Massad mean by 'the invention of homosexuality'?
3. What do you think Massad and Schmitt would each have to say about the film *Dangerous living*?
4. Is there a 'degree-zero' of homosexuality? In other words, is there some discernible aspect of same-sex desire that is the same for all societies and historical periods? And what would you have to presuppose in order to offer an answer to this question?
5. What are the (a) *critical* and (b) *political* advantages and disadvantages to thinking in terms of 'gay identity'?

Reading:

- Brief excerpt from Halperin, D.M. (2002) *How to do the history of homosexuality*. Chicago: CUP. (2-4).
- Dunne, B. (1998) 'Power and sexuality in the Middle East'. *Middle East Report*. Issue 206: 8-11, 29.
- Exchange between Massad & Schmitt in *Public culture*. 14(2): 361-85; 15(3): 587-91, 593-4.

**Monday,  
September 26**

**Deviance and the Law:  
From von Sacher-Masoch to Krafft-Ebing**

Massad's critique of 'the Gay International' challenges many of our received ideas concerning gender and sexuality. This week we shall begin to examine the history of these ideas, with special attention to its contemporary relevance. With the work of figures such as Freud, Darwin and Einstein, the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries saw the emergence of new possibilities for humanity's understanding of itself and its place in history – and, indeed, in the universe. Much of our contemporary language concerning gender and sexuality also dates to this period. Terms such as *heterosexuality*, *homosexuality*, *sadism* and *masochism* were all coined during this era, and bear complex relationships with prevalent conceptions of religion, society, normalcy and the proper exercise of state power. In this session, we shall discuss two late 19<sup>th</sup> century classics on sexual 'deviance': Leopold von Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in furs* and Richard von Krafft-Ebing's *Psychopathia sexualis*. Emphasis will be placed on the history of our contemporary assumptions regarding the relationship between power, desire and the law.

Opening questions:

1. In what ways is desire related to power?
2. What is the nature of deviance? And what are its causes?
3. What is the significance of the legal contract between the mistress and her slave in Sacher-Masoch's *Venus in Furs*? Why do you think she calls him Gregor?
4. What is 'the law'? Under what conditions is it exercised? By whom? On whom? And what is the nature of its transgression and/or deviance?

\*Try answering question 4 both for von Sacher-Masoch and for, e.g., popular television programs like *Law and Order*.

Reading:

von Krafft-Ebing, R. *Psychopathia sexualis* (pp. 1-15; 32-6; 86-8).

von Sacher-Masoch, L. *Venus in furs*, pp. 3-123 (including appendix).

**Thursday,  
September 29**

**The treatment of alterity:  
Queering Kafka's *Metamorphosis***

Through a close reading of Kafka's *Metamorphosis*, we'll discuss the *treatment* of alterity – both in the sense of 'attitudes toward' and the desire 'to cure'. In our discussion, we shall reflect both on our analysis of religion, gender and the state in Egypt, as well as on recent trends and debates in the United States (e.g., same-sex marriage, the family).

Opening questions:

1. What is the nature of Gregor Samsa's metamorphosis? And what is its cause?
2. How does Gregor relate to himself, his condition and his family when he recognizes the change? And how do they relate to him?
3. What does Gregor's predicament say about the nature of alterity or Otherness? And to what extent can this be read as an ironic commentary on our readings from Sacher-Masoch and Krafft-Ebing?
4. How might you compare Gregor's predicament with that of Firdaus in *Woman at point zero*?

Reading:

von Krafft-Ebing, R. *Psychopathia sexualis* (pp. 186-90).

Kafka, F. (2000 [1915]) 'The metamorphosis'. *The metamorphosis, In the penal colony, and other stories*. Trans. J. Neugrochel. New York etc: Simon & Schuster.

**Friday,  
September 30**

**Short writing assignment due at 5pm**

**Monday,  
October 3**

**To be or not to be?  
'Gay politics' and the ends of identity**

Those fighting both for and against gay rights often present their arguments in terms of 'identity'. But what is identity? And why is it seemingly so important? This week we'll examine some of the key purposes and presuppositions underpinning the language of identity-based politics. Our discussion will take as its point of departure a short **film**, entitled *I do exist!*, that will be screened at the beginning of class. In preparing for class, you should review your notes on the debate between Massad and Schmitt in *Public Culture*.

Opening questions:

1. What is identity?
2. Are gender and sexuality primarily matters of identity?
3. Do all people have 'identity'? Or – perhaps like 'homosexuality' – is the concept of 'identity' a distinctly Euro-american way of understanding ourselves?
4. What are the political implications of representing homosexuality as either genetically determined or as a learned behavior?
5. Once again: What are the (a) *critical* and (b) *political* advantages and disadvantages to thinking in terms of 'gay identity'? And what are the alternatives?

Reading:

- Gleason, P. (1983) 'Identifying identity: A semantic history'. *The journal of American history*. 69(4): 910-31.
- Anonymous (1990) 'Queers read this; I hate straights'. Pamphlet reprinted in: M. Blasius and S. Phelan (eds) *We are everywhere; A historical sourcebook for gay and lesbian politics*. London & New York: Routledge. (773-80).
- Stanton, G.T. & Maier, B. (2004) Excerpt [pp.11-17 & 131-56] from *Marriage on trial: The case against same-sex marriage and parenting*. InterVarsity Press.

**Thursday,  
October 6**

**Turning sex inside out:  
Confession and the idea of 'repression'**

Why is sex such a 'hot' topic? Is the possibility of speaking freely about our sexuality something new? Is it as subversive as we've been led to believe? The very idea of sex – and, more specifically, that our 'natural' sexuality has somehow become repressed – is an idea with a history. We shall discuss some of the dominant trends in the material we've covered to date in the light of Foucault's classic text on the subject.

Opening questions:

1. What is 'the repressive hypothesis'? And where – if at all – is it discernible in contemporary Euro-american culture?
2. What is the nature of power according to 'the repressive hypothesis'? And what is Foucault's critique of this understanding of power?

3. What did Foucault mean by an ‘incitement to discourse’?
4. In what ways was the Christian *confessional* constitutive of ostensibly secular understandings of sexuality?
5. Are popular notions of ‘sexual liberation’ truly liberating? If so, how so? And, if not, what are the alternatives?

Reading:

Foucault, *History of sexuality*, pp. 1-75

**Monday,  
October 10**

***Reading period (Monday/Tuesday) – NO CLASS***

**Thursday,  
October 13**

**Biopower:**

**The control of life and death**

We shall continue our reading of *The History of sexuality* and consider some of the broader implications of Foucault’s argument for the configuration of a progressive politics.

Opening questions:

1. What is ‘biopower’?
2. Foucault argued that there is a fundamental disjuncture between the way we talk about power and the way that power actually works in the contemporary world. What precisely is the nature of this disjuncture?
3. Given your reading of Foucault, under what conditions is state power – particularly as it pertains to religion and sexuality – susceptible to resistance and/or subversion?
4. What might Foucault have said about the ‘gay marriage’ debate?
5. What is the point of studying history?

Reading:

Foucault, *The history of sexuality*, pp. 75-159.

**Friday,  
October 14**

**Short writing assignment due at 5pm**

**Monday,  
October 17**

**Gender trouble I:**

**From identity to performance**

What is it to be a woman? Or a man? Is it possible to be both? Or perhaps neither? And why might it matter? Last week we considered Foucault’s critique of ‘sexuality’, and thought through some of its implications for a progressive politics. This week we shall continue our examination of dominant presuppositions regarding gender and sexuality with a reading of Judith Butler’s now classic text, *Gender trouble*. If Foucault denaturalized ‘sexuality’ by tracing the history of its emergence as a form of power/knowledge, one might understand Butler to have made a similar move by arguing for the performative nature of gender identities. She claimed,

'There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results' (p.133). What precisely does this mean? And do you agree?

*The assignment for your **midterm paper** will be distributed and introduced at the end of today's session. It is due on Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup> at 5pm.*

Opening questions:

1. Why is Butler critical of the concept of 'women' as the subject of feminism? (And what does the phrase 'the subject of feminism' mean?)
2. What is 'substantialism', and what is its relevance for a critical understanding of gender identities?
3. In what sense is gender a performance? In what ways is repetition important? And can you think of any examples of where this might play out in contemporary Euro-american culture?
4. At the end of the day, what are the political implications of Butler's performative account of gender norms?

Reading:

Butler, J. (1990) Preface & Chapter One. *Gender trouble; Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York & London: Routledge, (xxvii-xxxiii & 3-44).

**Thursday,  
October 20**

**Strictly ballroom:  
From subjection to subversion?**

We'll watch the **film** *Paris is burning* in class. Based both on the film and our reading of Judith Butler's *Gender trouble*, we shall formulate a series of questions that will be taken up in our discussion on Monday.

Opening questions:

1. To what extent are the efforts of the American left – 'liberals'/Democrats/ whatever – relevant to the problems facing lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) citizens?
2. What are some of the critiques of the mainstream LGBT movement? And *on what grounds* do you or do you not agree with them?
3. How do race and class impinge on the politics of 'gay rights'? What are the key issues? For whom are they relevant? Who's left out? And why might it matter?
4. What is the nature of the relationship between the opinions you've encountered in these three articles and what one tends to imagine as 'mainstream America'? What are the implications for the authors and those for whom they claim to speak? And what are the implications for 'mainstream America'?
5. What in your opinion – and in the opinion of our authors – might a truly progressive politics look like?

Reading:

Mecca, T.A. (2004) 'It's all about class'. In: M.B. Sycamore (ed) *That's revolting! Queer strategies for resisting assimilation*. New York: Publishers Group West.

Jindal, P. (2004) 'Sites of resistance or sites of racism?'. In: Sycamore (ed).  
Willse, C. & D. Spade (2005) 'Freedom in a regulatory state? Lawrence,  
marriage and biopolitics'. *Widener Law Review*. 11(2): 309f.

**Monday,  
October 24**

**Gender trouble II:  
Performance, parody, politics**

Among other questions, we'll want to consider the extent to which drag – and particularly *voguing* in the Harlem ballrooms in the late 1970s and early 80s – comprises the subversion of gender norms that Judith Butler's argument has often been thought to espouse. Is *voguing* really subversive? Alternatively, does it merely reiterate heterocentric norms? Or, perhaps, might it actually engender both tendencies at the same time?

With specific reference to *Paris is burning*:

1. Do you agree with Butler's contention that 'gender is a kind of persistent impersonation that passes as the real'?
2. Does being female – or male – constitute a 'natural fact' or a 'cultural performance'?
3. What is the nature of 'the real' (or 'the natural') and how do you know?
4. If gendered 'identities' are an effect of power, what might effective subversion look like? Under what conditions is resistance – if that's even the right word – possible?
5. Do *drag* performances – and *voguing* in the Harlem ballrooms in particular – 'produce subversive discontinuity and dissonance among sex, gender, and desire and call into question their alleged relations?' (Butler 1999: xxx). And, if so, so what? What are the practical – i.e., *political* – consequences?

Reading:

Butler, J. (1990) Chapter Two & Conclusion. *Gender trouble; Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York & London: Routledge, (45-100 & 181-90).

**Thursday,  
October 27**

**No class – extra time to prepare midterm paper**

**Midterm papers due Friday, October 28<sup>th</sup> at 5pm**

**Monday,  
October 31**

**Strīdharmā:  
How to be the perfect wife**

We shall begin the second half of the term with a review of what was covered prior to the midterm. We'll then focus on the representation of women in classical Indian literature, and consider possible advantages and disadvantages of exporting a contemporary European critical approach to an ancient non-European context.

Opening questions:

1. What – if anything – can these two texts tell us about the position of women in classical Indian society?
2. What is *dharma*? What is *kāma*? And how are they related?
3. To what extent is the *Kāma Sūtra* comprehensible in terms of contemporary western ideas regarding sexuality and desire?
4. Might the *Kāma Sūtra* be considered an example of what Foucault called *ars erotica*?
5. And how does its articulation of morality and pleasure compare with that of *The law code of Manu*?

Reading:

Excerpts from *The Kāma Sūtra*, trans. A. Daniélou. (pp. 1-6; 139-44; 197-214).

Excerpts from *The law code of Manu (Mānavadharmasūtra)*, trans. P. Olivelle. (pp. xxxviii-xlv, 13-48, 85-105, 149-71).

Background reading and viewing:

*The long search: Hinduism, 330 million gods* (on reserve).

Excerpt on Indian history from *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Net resource (see link on Blackboard).

**Thursday,  
November 3**

**Debating the Rāmāyaṇa:**

**Sītā, satī and the serialized epic**

We'll continue with our analysis of *dharma*, comparing colonial-era and contemporary debates on the position of women in Indian society, with special reference to the practice of *sati*. We shall view an episode of Ramanand Sagar's *Ramayan* in class, and consider some of the ways in which Indian state television has articulated nation, gender and religion through its serialization of the classical story of Rām, the ideal king.

Opening questions:

1. Under what conditions might one know and practice one's *dharma*?
2. In what ways does *dharma* articulate the past and the present?
3. What are the foundations or sources of tradition? And who is authorized to say what counts as traditional?
4. How are colonialism, patriarchy and Hindu tradition related?

Reading:

Mani, L. (1989) 'Contentious traditions: The debate on *sati* in colonial India'. In: K. Sangari & S. Vaid (eds) *Recasting women; Essays in Indian colonial history*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, pp. 88-126.

Tully, 'The rewriting of the Ramayan', from *No full stops in India*.

Thapar, R. (2003) Excerpt from *Cultural pasts: Essays in Early Indian History*. Oxford: OUP.

**Monday,  
November 7**

**Colonial masculinity:  
Queering the British imagination**

‘Manliness’ has long loomed large in the British colonial imagination. This week we shall examine some of the ways in which notions of masculinity and effeminacy played out in colonial representations of – and relations with – Indian subjects.

Opening questions:

1. What was the significance of ‘white womanhood’ in colonial India?
2. Is ‘development’ a gendered concept? And how – if at all – is it related to ideals traditionally associated with colonialism and ‘the white man’s burden’?
3. What is at issue in the critique of ‘white men saving brown women from brown men’? And what are the alternatives?
4. Compare the articulation of race, gender and sexual depravity in this week’s readings with our earlier reading from Krafft-Ebing.

Reading:

- Sinha, M. (1995) Introduction and Ch.1, Colonial masculinity: The ‘manly Englishman’ and the ‘effeminate Bengali’ in the late nineteenth century. Manchester: MUP.
- MacMunn, G.F. (1933) ‘Darkest India’, from *The underworld of India*. London: Jarrolds.

**Time & place TBA**

**Film:** We’ll arrange a time for a screening of Deepa Mehta’s critically acclaimed film, *Fire*, which openly challenged traditional cinematic representations of family, gender and sexuality in India.

**Thursday,  
November 10**

**Gender is on *Fire*:  
Cinema and same-sex desire in contemporary India**

In this session, we’ll discuss the film *Fire* as well as the violent reaction from Hindu nationalist groups.

Opening questions:

1. Re-reading the final paragraph of Bachman’s essay, might we interpret the debate on ‘Fire’ in terms of a Foucauldian ‘incitement to discourse’?
2. Viridi argues that the Indian nation has been imagined through cinema. If this is the case, what is ‘Fire’ saying about India? How does it position itself in relation to the ideas of nation, gender and romance prevalent in popular Hindi cinema?
3. What was the significance of Radha catching on fire at the end of the film? Was it a test? If so, did she pass?
4. How is the institutionalized suffering of men related to the institutionalized subjugation of women? What are the implications for a progressive politics?

Reading:

- Virdi, J. (2003) Chapters 1 & 2 from *The cinematic imagination: Indian popular films as social history*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press. (pp. 26-86)
- Patel, G. (2002) 'On fire: Sexuality and its incitements'. In R. Vanita (ed) *Queering India; Same-sex love and eroticism in Indian culture and society*. New York & London: Routledge, pp.222-33.
- Bachman, M.. (2002) 'After the fire'. In R. Vanita (ed) *Queering India; Same-sex love and eroticism in Indian culture and society*. New York & London: Routledge, pp.234-43.

**Monday,  
November 14**

**Women in the Dutch East Indies:**

**A tale of wives, concubines and prostitutes**

Today we'll shift our attention east from India to the archipelago that would eventually be known as Indonesia. Prior to independence, this string of some 17,000 islands were known as the Dutch East Indies. Complex relations of race, religion and gender characterized life in the Dutch island colony. We shall examine both Dutch and Javanese representations of married life, concubinage and prostitution, and consider the various positions and perceptions of women under colonial rule.

Opening questions:

1. What *types* of women were recognized by the VOC?
2. What – if any – parallels do you see with the situation in colonial India?
3. Is prostitution a legitimate profession?
4. Is *Nyai Dasima* a racist and/or chauvinistic story?
5. How – if at all – is the idea of 'the oneness of humanity' (as frequently invoked in the introduction to Kartini's letters) complicit with the colonial enterprise? And what might this say about contemporary calls to 'pluralism' and/or 'multiculturalism'?

Reading:

- Hesselink, L. (1987) 'Prostitution: A necessary evil, particularly in the colonies'. In: E. Locher-Scholten & A. Niehof (eds) *Indonesian women in focus*. Leiden: KITLV, pp.205-24.
- Francis, G. (translated by H. Aveling, 1988) *The story of Nyai Dasima*.
- Kartini, Introduction & 4 letters from *Letters from a Javanese Princess*. (pp. vii-xviii, 142-8, 238-9, 275, 297-9)

Background reading:

Excerpt from the *Encyclopaedia of Modern Asia* on the VOC and Indonesia.

**Thursday,  
November 17**

**Dharma wanita:**

**Sex and the bureaucratic family**

Many have argued that the postcolonial Indonesian state simply picked up where the Dutch left off. In this session, we'll examine the state-ideological configuration of 'the Indonesian family' and explore the extent to which Suharto's New Order régime rearticulated images of women that were prevalent under Dutch colonial rule. We'll watch and discuss a short state-

sponsored Hindu television program (*in translation*) that was broadcast on Mothers' Day as an example of how a state institution has articulated gender in terms of religious 'tradition'.

Opening questions:

1. In what ways was the rôle of civil servants under the New Order similar to that of colonial administrators and soldiers under the VOC?
2. What did Suryakusuma mean by 'State Ibuism'? And how does this play out in the story of *Sawitri*?
3. Is female heterosexuality necessarily subordinate to male power?

Reading:

- Suryakusuma, J.I. (1996) 'The state and sexuality in New Order Indonesia'. In: L.J. Sears (ed) *Fantasizing the feminine in Indonesia*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 92-119.
- Sunindyo, S. (1998) 'When the earth is female and the nation is mother: Gender, the armed forces and nationalism in Indonesia'. *Feminist review*, 58(1): 1-21.
- Fox, R. (n.d.) *Imagining the agamic audience: Hindu authority and its televisual addressees in late New Order Indonesia*.

Additional background:

Excerpt from the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* on New Order Indonesia.

**Monday,  
November 21**      **No class – extra time to prepare final assignment.**

**Thursday,  
November 24**      **No class – Thanksgiving holiday.**

**Monday,  
November 28**      **Sex, class, cinema:  
Indonesian, middle class and gay**

Earlier we discussed some of the ways in which cinema was implicated in imagining the Indian nation. But, in a similar fashion, films have also played an important rôle in imagining Indonesia. Cinematic production was carefully regulated under the New Order through both censorship and the control of funding. As in other mass media, filmic representations of 'sensitive' issues – such as sexuality, religion and class – were (at least notionally) kept well under control. Things changed rather dramatically with the collapse of the New Order and the rise of the reform movement in May 1998. In 2003, a film called *Arisan!* was released, causing a great deal of controversy as a result of its 'sympathetic' depiction of same-sex relationships, and specifically for a scene depicting 'a gay kiss'. We'll watch an excerpt of the film in class, and compare its articulation of social class, gender identity and same-sex desire with what we saw earlier in the semester in *Paris is burning*.

Opening questions:

1. What are the ethical underpinnings and implications of Murray's article?
2. How are social class, sex and gender related in contemporary Indonesia?
3. How subversive was the film *Arisan*? And how might it be compared with *Paris is burning*?

Reading:

Oetomo, D. (1996) 'Gender and sexual orientation in Indonesia'. In: L.J. Sears (ed) *Fantasizing the feminine in Indonesia*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp.259-69.

Boellstorff, T. (2004) 'Zines and zones of desire: Mass-mediated love, national romance, and sexual citizenship in *gay* Indonesia'. *The Journal of Asian Studies*. 63(2) 367-402.

Murray, A.J. (1999) 'Let them take ecstasy'. In: *Female desires; Same-sex relations and transgender practice across cultures*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 139-56.

**Thursday,  
December 1**

*Final presentations and peer review.*

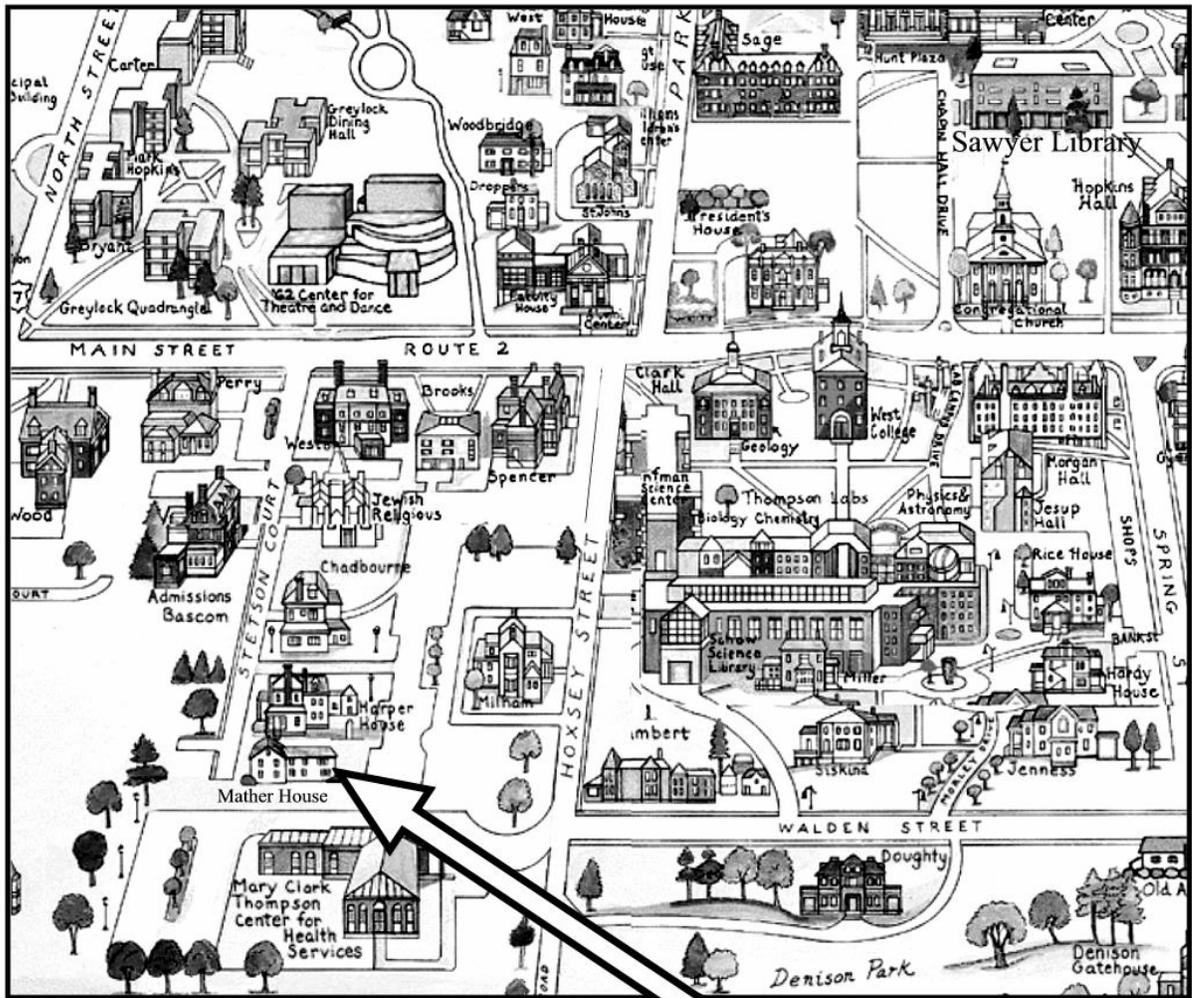
**Monday,  
December 5**

*Final presentations and peer review.*

**Thursday,  
December 8**

*Final presentations and peer review.*

**\*\*\*Final papers due Monday, December 12<sup>th</sup> at 5pm**



Mather House