Women’s, Gender, and Sexuality Studies 860  
Feminist Theory/Judith Butler  
Autumn Quarter 2011  
Fridays, 1:30-4:18pm  
Derby Hall 0048

Prof Mary Thomas  
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Office hours: Tuesdays, 2:30-3:30pm and by appointment (recommended for grad students). I am usually in my office every day, so just let me know in advance when you would like to meet.

Description: Judith Butler’s work has sculpted debates about identity and subjectivity for almost twenty years. This course will consider the poststructural, psychoanalytic, and political influences and methods that gird her theories of the subject. Students will not be expected to have prior training in any of these. The course will introduce the influence of Gender Trouble and Bodies That Matter at its outset, but we will not read these texts in their entirety. Reading assignments will focus on Butler’s writing beginning with and after the mid 1990s. We will explore how Butler imagines the formation of the subject, recognition, the constraints of subjectivity for political process, and the possibilities of social transformation given these constraints.

Course Requirements: All students should consult with me about their goals for the quarter, including their plans for submitting written materials (e.g., tailored thought papers, critical essays, seminar papers). Each student must write at least 20 pages during the quarter in whatever form s/he wishes, after consultation with me.

The most important requirement for the class is to come to class prepared to discuss the readings assigned. The course can only be as successful as your preparation and hard work allow.

Because everyone will have a unique plan for their writing, I cannot provide a precise breakdown of grades for the course. But attendance and preparation will count for 50% of your grade. I fully expect graduate students to attend all classes. The final 50% of your grade will be the pages that are designed in consultation with me; again, this page requirement can be subdivided.

Attendance policy: You must attend all classes. We lose two Fridays to holidays, so we only meet nine weeks; be sure you are at all of them. I am very strict on this requirement so please be aware of the consequences of missing a class: if you miss any class, your grade will be adversely affected. If you miss class for serious illness, you must provide a doctor’s excuse, or I consider it unexcused. The only other exception to the attendance policy is the presentation of a paper at a conference. The time for skipping classes is long past; as graduate students, being in class every day is connected with a responsibility to your peers to create strong and consistent class interactions. Without these, the course will not be successful.
All books are available locally for purchase at SBX Book Exchange only at 1806 N. High St.

1. The Judith Butler Reader
2. Excitable Speech
3. Psychic Life of Power
4. Antigone’s Claim
5. Undoing Gender
6. Precarious Life
7. Giving an Account of Oneself
8. Frames of War

Other readings are posted on Carmen.

Course Schedule

September 23
Read the following chapters from The Judith Butler Reader (Blackwell, 2004):
   Sara Salih’s Introduction, 1-17.
   Bodily inscriptions, performative subversions (1990), 90-118.
   Imitation and gender insubordination (1990), 119-137.
   The lesbian phallus and the morphological imaginary (1993), 138-179.

September 30


October 7

October 14

October 21
October 28


November 4

November 11
Veteran’s Day, no class

November 18

November 25
Thanksgiving holiday, no class

December 2


(Not on Carmen but easy to find on the library’s e-journal database.)