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Muller 316  
Office Hours: Tu/Thurs: 11:30-12:30  
Wed. 2:00-3:00  
Honors Senior Year Capstone:  
IISP40000  
NEWEST SEXES/GENDERS/AND RACES  
Fall 2009

### Theoretical Underpinnings of the Course:

This course asks students to think or re-think the static ways they think about sexes, races and genders. At the core will be attempts to de-naturalize and de-normalize the constructions of these categories to see what is known and unknown; what is historical construction and what is biological necessity; whether there is such a thing as biology or sexual and/or racial difference to 'begin with'—so-to-speak. The framework of the course is to open up possibilities for knowing 'deeply' about what we see and the way that we see it; what we look at and what we don't, and why. I will use notions of 'new', and 'old', and 'new-old' (my notion developed in my book Global Obscenities) to trace and track the way genders and races have changed, and have not changed. And we will also use the notions of 'newest-new' and 'newly-new' to underscore how the very notion of 'new', itself, is always in process, and changing.

Students are asked to theorize about the queries about color and race; sex and gender; specificity and universality in order to find their own thinking about the place of racialized gender and engendered racism in cultural construction. You are asked to interrogate the 'captured' language of diversity (as in racial) and equality (as in gender) and reconceptualize it in more fluid democratic formulation. But such a vision will differ for each student. Theory is the ability to imagine and envision beyond the self—and beyond individualized contained moments. Theory, in this sense, allows one to think big—with a history, with a future, with an understanding of the political narratives that operate both silently and loudly. My aim is to push students to draw connections wherever this may be possible so that you will see in enlarged fashion FROM these multiple and mixed sites.

### The General Focus of the Course

This course has evolved from several of my newest books with Zed Press. The premise of this new work is that genders and races can operate as floating signifiers—in other words that the sign/symbol of gender and race can operate in disconnected fashion from the actual sexed and colored body. There are new, and old, and new-old formulations of this,

and this seems especially true in times of militarization and war. We will discuss the Obama campaign and presidency as a site in which to see the fluidity and statisticity of race and gender.

The focus here is to unsettle the intellectual borders that have become naturalized and normalized: same/difference; self/other; nature/culture; white/black; etc. I will pluralize each side in such a way as to unsettle the clarity of the border lines especially between sex and gender; race and color; and race and gender.

This course uses multi-racial and intercultural visionings to see the body, especially female bodies in more complex, diverse fashion. I use the body—or bodies—as a racialized and sexualized site to re-look at the notion of universality and real democracy—from the site of black slave women, women voting in Iraq, females in the Bush administration, etc.

### Some More Specific Themes:

More specifically many of the readings will engage the following:

1. A redefinition of `the' body per se and with it understandings of the sexual body
2. A redefinition of `the' body as raced
3. A rethinking of the notions of male and female; man and woman; black and white
4. A reviewing of the meanings nature, political, culture, universal
5. An exposure to multi-cultural and multi-racial notions of gender and race
6. An examination of historical changes and diverse expressions of genders and races alongside
7. The continuity of gender and race
8. An examination of sites like Abu Ghraib, the Afghan and Iraq wars, the 2008 presidential election, for locations of sexual and racial decoys and their fluidity
9. A rethinking of feminisms and democratic theories from the pluralized site or genders and races

COURSE EXPECTATIONS: Each student is expected to be prepared and participatory in each seminar session and will complete two analytical papers based on the course readings.

### Course books at the I.C. Book Store

1. Anne Fausto-Sterling. SEXING THE BODY, preface, chap. 1-7, skim 8)
2. Judith Butler. UNDOING GENDER

3. Zillah Eisenstein. AGAINST EMPIRE; and also read the electronic reserve article Zadie Smith, "Speaking in Tongues", New York Review of Books, Vol. LVI, No. 3 (Feb. 26, 2009), pp. 41-44.
4. Richard Trexler. SEX AND CONQUEST
5. Michel Foucault. HISTORY OF SEXUALITY, AN INTRODUCTION
6. W.E.B. Dubois. THE SOULS OF BLACK FOLK, and also read the electronic reserve article Hua Hsu. "The End of White America?", Atlantic Monthly, vol. 303, no. 1 (February 2009), pp. 46-61.
7. Robert Young. COLONIAL DESIRE
8. Tram Nguyen. WE ARE ALL SUSPECTS NOW
9. Edward Said. THE QUESTION OF PALESTINE
10. Afsaneh Najmabadi. WOMEN WITH MUSTACHES, MEN WITHOUT BEARDS
11. Ruth Morgan and Saski Wieringa. TOMMY BOYS, LESBIAN MEN AND ANCESTRAL WIVES
12. Zillah Eisenstein. SEXUAL DECOYS; GENDER, RACE AND WAR IN IMPERIAL DEMOCRACY