

Sexuality and Nation: Rei[g]ns of Terror

[ETHN 127 / CGS 112]
[CSB 004]
[MWF / 11-11:50]
[Winter 2009]

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[Office hours: SSB 224]
[M / 12-1:30; W / 9:30-11]
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"We must smother the internal and external enemies of the Republic or perish with it; now in this situation, the first maxim of your policy ought to be to lead the people by reason and the people's enemies by terror."

1. Quote above from
Maximilien Robespierre

2. Photo right: Robert
Mapplethorpe, *Hooded
Man*, 1980, altered

3. Photo far right, Haj
Ali al-Qaisi, Abu Ghraib
prison, 2003



[Description]

In this course, we will examine the important role sexuality plays in the national imaginary. Why does the nation care so much about who you—yes, you—sleep with? Why are there so many laws, court decisions, and material as well as social incentives for having “normal” kinds of sex? What does politics and economics have to do with sexual acts and sexual identities? How is the War on Terror also a war on racialized sexuality?

We will look at three sites, each of which considers the relationship between race, sexuality, and nation: the relationship between racism and heteronormativity; the politics of sexuality in Junot Diaz's *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, and the War on Terror [but whose terror?] as a site of sexual power.

Specifically, we will address:

- 1] the critical importance that sexuality plays in the management of American democracy; and
- 2] how to read the 'War on Terror' with an emphasis on its racial and sexual politics.

[Course Materials]

The majority of readings will be available on E-reserve [reserves.ucsd.edu]; readings marked with * * are available elsewhere online, listed as a Web Link and in the bibliography, both of which appear on the WebCT course page.

There are two books we will be reading in their entirety, Junot Diaz's novel, *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao*, and the art book *Botero: Abu Ghraib*. The first should be readily available at all bookstores; there are copies of both at Groundworks and they are also on reserve at Geisel.

Finally, there is a WebCT course page that students will use frequently. Please find it at <http://webct.ucsd.edu>.

[Grading and Assignments]

For this class, your grade will be determined by a “contract” grade. This means you will choose at which level—corresponding to a particular grade—you will work:

To earn a C [or Pass]:	To earn a B :	To earn an A :
Active Participation	Active Participation	Active Participation
5 Thesis Breakdowns	6 Thesis Breakdowns	7 Thesis Breakdowns
5 Wks of Online Discussion	6 Wks of Online Discussion	7 Wks of Online Discussion
One 3-5-page Paper	Two 3-page Papers	Two 5-page Papers

The following assignments form the core of your course grade:

1. **active participation**
2. **thesis breakdowns**
3. **online discussion**
4. **3-5-page paper[s]**

Examples of thesis breakdowns and online discussions can be found on the WebCT page.

By **active participation**, I mean more than showing up for class. In the effort to create a space where learning is shared and communal, it is critical for you to join in discussions by asking questions, seeking clarification, and offering ideas and interpretations. For some of you, this will mean taking a certain risk in asserting yourself publicly; it is a risk worth taking. Failure to actively participate may result in the decrease of a half-grade from the overall course grade.

The purpose of **thesis breakdowns** is to demonstrate that you understand what you are reading. Select one sentence in the reading that you think best articulates the main points of the essay. On a single page, in double-spaced typewritten prose, “unpack” the sentence—break down its ideas and explain its significance for the course. Guidelines for submission: I will only accept these on the first class meeting of each week [typically, Mondays], and the paper must refer to a reading for the upcoming week—one we have not yet discussed.

Online discussions will take place on the WebCT site for the class, which can be accessed at <http://webct.ucsd.edu>. In order to qualify for having completed a “week” of online discussion, you must 1] Respond to the question I post *for that week*, and 2] Make two other posts, as threads, that engage with and respond to other students’ posts. Each post should strive for at least three thoughtful sentences. The goal is to create a critical conversation that complements our work in class. I encourage online discussions to continue for the length of the term, but posts that qualify for the assignment must appear online by the end of the week—let’s say Saturday night.

The **3-5-page paper[s]** will have as their topics the Abu Ghraib prison and the Junot Diaz novel. Late in the term, I will announce and post three prompts for each topic, and you will write a response to one or both, depending on the grade you are aiming for. Included in these prompts will be the expectations I have for the paper: format, quality, etc. The papers will be due in the last week of the quarter and finals week.

A note on quality: All work that is submitted must meet certain standards of quality and integrity. Assignments that are subpar will have to be revised within a certain timeframe. As mentioned above, my expectations for the paper will be explained when the prompt is announced and posted. Finally, the overall quality of the work you submit will determine whether a +/- will be added to the overall course grade.

Week 1

Ernest Renan, "What is a Nation?"

Etienne Balibar, "The Nation Form: History and Ideology"

Not-so-Invisible Hands: Black America

Week 2

Siobhan Somerville, "Scientific Racism and the Invention of the Homosexual Body"

Thaddeus Russell, "The Color of Discipline: Civil Rights and Black Sexuality"

Junot Diaz, *The Brief and Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* [beginning-p. 50]

Week 3 (No meeting Jan 19.)

Daniel Moynihan, "The Negro Family: The Case for National Action" * *

Diaz, continued [Chapter 2]

Week 4

The Combahee River Collective, "The Combahee River Collective Statement" * *

Roderick Ferguson, "Something Else to Be: *Sula*, *The Moynihan Report*, and the Negations of Black Lesbian Feminism"

M. Jacqui Alexander, "Not Just (Any) *Body* Can Be a Citizen: The Politics of Law, Sexuality and Postcoloniality in Trinidad and Tobago and the Bahamas"

Diaz, continued [pp. 77-119]

Week 5

David Serlin, "Crippling Masculinity: Queerness and Disability in U.S. Military Culture 1800-1945"

Margot Canaday, "Building a Straight State: Sexuality and Social Citizenship under the 1944 G.I. Bill"

Al-Ali Nadje, "Reconstructing Gender: Iraqi Women between Dictatorship, War, Sanctions and Occupation"

Diaz, continued [pp. 119-165]

Week 6

Michelle Brown, "'Setting the Conditions' for Abu Ghraib: The Prison Nation Abroad"

Melissa Murdock, "A Thousand and One Photographs: A Discussion of Abu Ghraib and the Orientalist Homoerotic" * *

Susan Sontag, "Regarding the Torture of Others" * *

Diaz, continued [Chapter 4, which ends on p. 210]

Week 7 (No meeting Feb 16.)

Standard Operating Procedure, dir. Errol Morris

Mary Ann Tetreault, "The Sexual Politics of Abu Ghraib: Hegemony, Spectacle, and the Global War on Terror"

Diaz, continued [Chapter 5]

Week 8

Sherene Razack, "How is White Supremacy Embodied? Sexualized Racial Violence at Abu Ghraib"

Jasbir Puar, "Abu Ghraib and U.S. Sexual Exceptionalism"

Diaz, continued [Chapter 6]

The Tangle of Pathology: Embodying Abu Ghraib

Mission Accomplished?

Week 9

Botero: Abu Ghraib, including essay by David Ebony
Jasbir Puar and Amit Rai, "Monster, Terrorist, Fag: The War on Terrorism and the Production of Docile Patriots"
Diaz, continued [Part III]

Week 10

Vernadette Gonzalez, "Military Bases, 'Royalty Trips,' and Imperial Modernities: Gendered and Racialized Labor in the Postcolonial Philippines"
Yen Le Espiritu, "The 'We-Win-Even-When-We-Lose' Syndrome: U.S. Press Coverage of the Twenty-Fifth Anniversary of the 'Fall of Saigon'"

Final Exam Due: Monday, March 16, 2:30 pm

[Ethnic Studies Major or Minor]

Many students take an Ethnic Studies course because the topic is of great interest or because of a need to fulfill a social science, non-contiguous, or other college requirement. Often students have taken three or four classes out of "interest" yet have no information about the major or minor and don't realize how close they are to a major, a minor, or even a double major. An Ethnic Studies major is excellent preparation for a career in law, public policy, government and politics, journalism, education, public health, social work, international relations, and many other careers. If you would like information about the Ethnic Studies major or minor at UCSD, please contact Yolanda Escamilla, Undergraduate Advisor for the Department of Ethnic Studies, at (858) 534-3277 or yescamilla@ucsd.edu.

[University Policies]

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2. Students are expected to complete the course in compliance with the instructor's standards. No student shall engage in any activity that involves attempting to receive a grade by means other than honest effort.

For more information, please consult the UCSD Policy on Integrity of Scholarship.