**Intersectional Feminist Perspectives on Vulnerability and Biopolitics**

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This graduate seminar examines feminist and sociolegal perspectives on the ambivalent relationship between vulnerability, biopolitics and intersectionality. Scholars (Berlant, Butler, Fineman, Kirby, Turner, Satz) have recently advanced vulnerability as a theory and material condition that might address the gaps in human rights, equal protection and identitarian frameworks – oversights that intersectional feminist analysis has long critiqued. But biopolitics similarly depends upon circulating narratives of risk and protectionism that are essential for legitimating discrimination and violence. Readings will consider how intersectional, transnational and women of color feminist perspectives approach the ambivalent political ramifications of vulnerability. Critiques of equal protections, neoliberalism and human rights frameworks are considered. We will scrutinize the roles of materiality, discourse, embodiment, performance and legal institutions in constructing notions of the vulnerable subject and its others. In turn we will address the benefits and liabilities of claiming vulnerability as a political subjectivity requiring state remedies. Points of saturation include intersectional questions of: citizenship and migration; national security and rescue; global capitalism; queer futurity; dependency; intimacy; (post)humanity and animal rights. The course concludes by exploring how material and ontological experiences of vulnerability can be understood differently, via a range of desiring practices and institutional reforms that may remedy states of precariousness, or hold up the possibility of making them otherwise.

**Readings will include:** Leila Abu-Lughod, Georgio Agamben, Sara Ahmed, Gargi Bhattacharyya, Jacqueline Bhabha, Lauren Berlant, Wendy Brown, Kristin Bumiller, Judith Butler, Shu Lea Cheang, Lee Edelman, Fatima El-Tayeb, Martha Fineman, Michel Foucault, Inderpal Grewal, Judith Halberstam, Evelyynn Hammonds, Kara Keeling, Eve Feder Kittay, José Esteban Muñoz, Martha Nussbaum, Adrian Piper, Jasbir Puar, Dorothy Roberts, Ani Satz, Susan Sontag, Diana Taylor, Bryan Turner, Carey Wolfe, Barbara Woodhouse.

**Week 1: Biopolitics and Vulnerability**
- Butler: “Violence, Mourning, Politics” in *Precarious Life*
- Bryan S. Turner. “Vulnerability and Suffering” in *Vulnerability and Human Rights*
- Fineman: “The Vulnerable Subject”
- Agamben: “The Paradox of Sovereignty”; “Part II: Homo Sacer”
- Foucault: “Right of Death and Power over Life”

Week 2: Woundedness, Pain, Affect, Visuality
- Elaine Scarry: “Introduction” in *The Body in Pain*
- Lauren Berlant: “The Subject of True Feeling: Pain, Privacy and Politics”
- Sara Ahmed: “The Contingency of Pain” in *Cultural Politics of Emotion*
- Susan Sontag: Chapters 4&5 in *Regarding the Pain of Others*

→ Artifacts: Photographs – *Without Sanctuary*; Abu Ghraib


Week 3: Precarious Memory; Body; Archival Injury
- Moraga, “La Güera,” “It is the Poverty” “It Got Her Over” “You Call it ‘Amputation”’ “For Amber” in *Loving in the War Years*
- Shu Lea Cheang, “Don't want my orgasm simulated”

→ Artifacts: Pena and Fusco; Selections of Benjamin; “Never Forget “National Rhetoric

Recommended: Adrian Piper, “Passing for White, Passing for Black”; David Simpson, 9/11 *The Culture of Commemoration*

Week 4: Human Rights and Differences
- Hannah Arendt. Selections from *The Human Condition*
- Tobin Siebers, “Disability and the Right to Have Rights”
- Bryan Turner, “Reproductive and Sexual Rights”

→ Artifacts: Excerpts, *Emmanuel’s Gift*

Week 5: Globalization, Neo-liberalism, Violence

→ Artifact: Señorita Extraviada

**Weeks 6: Belonging, Nation, Citizenship**
- Linda Kerber, “The Stateless as the Citizen’s Other”
- Shane Phelan: “Structures of Strangeness: Bodies, Passions and Citizenship” in Sexual Strangers
- Mary E. Odem, “Subaltern Immigrants: Undocumented Workers and National Belonging in the United States”
- Jacqueline Bhabha, “The ‘Mere Fortuity of Birth’? Children, Mothers, Borders and the Meaning of Citizenship”

→ Artifact: Frozen River (Part I)


**Week 7: Migrations, Legibility, Labors**
- Aiwa Ong, “A Biocartography: Maids, Neoslavery and NGOs”
- Michael Davidson, “Organs without Bodies: Transplant Narratives in the Global Market” Concerto for the Left Hand
How are nation, citizenship, migration, labor, and caretaking asserted in this film? How does this film reflect or critique intersectional feminist analysis?

**Week 8: Rescue and Security**


**Recommended:**

- Jasbir Puar, Selections from *Terrorist Assemblages*
  - “Homonationalism and Biopolitics,”

**Week 9: Child, Family and State: Welfare and Imprisoned Women**

- Dorothy Roberts, selections from *Shattered Bonds: The Color of Child Welfare*
- Barbara Woodhouse, “A World Fit For Children is a World Fit for Everyone: Ecogenerism, Feminism, and Vulnerability”

**Artifact:** *Sentence for Two*

**Week 10: Intimacy, Kinship, Dependency**

- Martha Fineman “The Sexual Family” in *Feminism and Queer Legal Theory*
- Anna Marie Smith, “From Paternafare to Marriage Promotion: Sexual Regulation and Welfare Reform” in *Feminist and Queer Legal Theory*
- Robyn Wiegman, “Intimate Publics: Race, Property and Personhood”
- Fineman “Dependency and Social Debt: Cracking the Foundational Myths”

**Recommended:** Eva Feder Kittay, “Policy and a Public Ethic of Care”; Elizabeth Povinelli: “Notes on Gridlock: Genealogy, Intimacy, Sexuality”

**Week 11: Caregiving and the Labors that Unbind**
Women’s Studies 585, Spring 2011  
Emory Women’s Studies PhD Program
- Laura T. Kessler, “Transgressive Caregiving”
- Zahra Meghani and Lisa Eckenwiler, “Care for the Caregivers?: Transnational Justice And Undocumented Non-Citizen Care Workers”

➔ Artifact: Maquilapolis

Week 12: Futurity
- Sara Ahmed, “In the Name of Love” In The Cultural Politics of Emotion
- Stockton, “Growing Sideways or Why Children Appear to Get Queerer in the 20th Century”
- Kara Keeling, “Music from the World Tomorrow’: Poetry from the Future and the (Im)possible Politics of Afrofuturism”


➔ Artifact: The Aggressives

Week 13: Animality Rights – Disabling Human Normativity
- Angela Harris “Should People of Color Support Animal Rights”
- Nussbaum, “Beyond ‘Compassion and Humanity’: Justice for Nonhuman Animals”
- Ani Satz “Animals as Vulnerable Subjects: Beyond Interest – Convergence, Hierarchy and Property”
- Carey Wolfe, “Learning From Temple Grandin: Animal Studies, Disability Studies, and Who Comes After the Subject”


Week 14: Desiring Otherwise; Queering the Horizon
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- Wendy Brown, "Moralism as Anti-Politics"
- Evelynn Hammonds, “Black (W)holes and the Geometry of Black Female Sexuality”
- Ann Cvetkovich, “Trauma and Touch: Butch-Femme Sexualities”
- Gayatri Gopinath “Impossible Desires”

Recommended: Muñoz, Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity

Course Reader Bibliography


