

Introduction to Bisexual Theory

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Course Description

Bisexual theory has emerged within the last decade as a discipline aligned with critical theory, queer theory and gay and lesbian studies. This course will introduce students to this new discipline through its key writings and concepts. Students will make use of material from the social sciences, psychology, law, and activist writings. No prior knowledge of bisexuality is required, though some work in gender studies, sexual ethics, or cultural studies would be useful. The course is organized into three units.

1) Bisexual Epistemologies: In this section we will examine epistemologies grounding bisexual theory. We will explore bisexual theory's emergence in response to issues in queer theory and the rise of gay and lesbian studies. We will also examine models of identity development – what is developing and how, and what it means for bisexuality to be visible or erased.

2) Bisexual Politics: We will examine the work of bisexual theorists on gender, and on racial identities such as biracial and multiracial. Why does our social location matter to our politics? We will also look at bisexual research with an emphasis on how bisexual research subjects are constructed.

3) Bisexual Methodologies: Finally, we will turn to particular methodologies bisexual theory has used to see how epistemology and politics manifests in theory itself. We will look at sexual geographies, deconstruction, and film theory.

Course Objectives

By the end of the course I hope you will be able to:

1. Discover, express and evaluate your own views on bisexual theory's origins and content.
2. Accurately assess views different from your own. You should be able to articulate political, ethical, or religious positions so that a person holding that position would be able to say, "Yes, you have understood my argument."
3. Be able to engage with opposing views on a level that moves beyond superficial differences to fundamental differences of values and methodologies.
4. Be able to address questions about the influences, content and application of bisexual theory and apply this knowledge to a topic of interest to you.

Reading Materials

Whenever possible, the assigned readings are available in the reserve reading section of the library. Several articles are also available online, or electronically through the library website.

Marking

Participation (10%): Attendance will be taken in each class. Please contact me through email if you are unable to attend. In some circumstances a quiz will be assigned in place of missed classes to ensure that you understand the reading material. In addition to attending, you will be marked based on your contribution to the class. Arrive on time and prepared to demonstrate your knowledge of the readings during the class discussion.

Reading questions (10%): Each reading will have accompanying questions for reflection. These are intended to guide your reading, and direct your attention to the implications of what you have read. Answer them briefly, bring them to class for discussion, and pass them in at the end of class. Please limit your answers to one typewritten page.

Reflection papers (30%): You will write reflective papers on two of the course units. The first reflection paper is due by week 4. The second is due by week 9. Papers must be two to three pages each.

Major paper (50%): You will be asked to choose one of the topics we have covered in this course (identity development, bisexual geographies,, etc.) and relate this topic to an issue of personal interest. Papers must be no less than fifteen pages and no more than twenty. Papers are due on the last day of class.

About Plagiarism

It is the responsibility of every student to inform themselves about the university's Code of Behaviour on Academic Matters <<http://www.utoronto.ca/govcncl/pap/policies/behaveac.html>>.

Examples of plagiarism includes:

- Copying the ideas, structure or words of another person (ex: cutting and pasting material found in a book, article, or web page, even if you reword or alter it in some way.
- Borrowing or buying another persons work and passing it in as your own.
- Submitting the same material to more than one course.

Details about how to avoid Plagiarism can be found online at <<http://www.utoronto.ca/writing/plagsep.html>>

Weekly Topics and Readings

Unit 1: Bisexual Epistemologies

Week 1: Defining Bisexual Theory

The class lecture will examine the emergence of bisexual theory, its influences, its aims, and its key theorists.

- In-class assignment: questionnaire
- Preparation: Have read the readings listed below before class.

Sharon Morris and Merl Storr, "Bisexual Theory: A Bi Academic Intervention" *Journal of Gay, lesbian and Bisexual Identity* 2, no. 1 (1997): 1-5. (5 pages)

Mark A. Gammon, "Troubling the Canon: Bisexuality and Queer Theory," *Journal of Homosexuality* 523, no. 1/2 (2007): 159-184. (25)

Steven Angelides, "Historicizing (Bi)Sexuality: A Rejoinder for Gay/Lesbian Studies, Feminism, and Queer Theory," *Journal of Homosexuality* 52, no. 1/2 (2007): 125–158. (33)

Maria Pramaggiore, "Extracts from Epistemologies of the Fence, (1996)" in *Bisexuality: A Critical Reader*, ed. Merl Storr (New York: Routledge, 1999), 144-149. (5)

Week 2: Sexual Identity Development

- Preparation: Have read the readings below before class.
- Answer reading questions to pass in next week.

Michele J. Eliason and Robert Schope, "Shifting Sands or Solid Foundation? Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Identity Formation," in *The Health of Sexual Minorities: Public Health Perspectives on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Populations*, ed. Ilan H. Meyer and Mary E. Northridge (New York: Springer, 2007), 3-26. www.springer.com/cda/content/document/cda_downloadocument/9780387288710-c1.pdf. (24)

Kim Ficera, "The Movement Is Wrong. Choosing Is Powerful." *New Haven Advocate* (June 29, 2000): www.newhavenadvocate.com.

Liz A. Highleyman, "Identity And Ideas: Strategies For Bisexuals," in *Bisexual Politics: Theories, Queries and Visions*, ed. Naomi Tucker, Liz Highleyman and Rebecca Kaplan (New York: Harrington Press, 1995), 73-92. (19)

Heather Marie Knous, "The Coming Out Experience for Bisexuals: Identity Formation and Stigma Management," *Journal of Bisexuality* 5, no. 4 (2005): 37-59. (23)

Sara Bleiberg, Adam Fertmann, Christina Godino and Ashley Todhunter, "Layer Cake Model of Bisexual Identity Development," *National Association for Campus Activities Programming Magazine* 37, no. 8 (April 2005): 1-19. <http://www.nyu.edu/residential.education/pdfs/article.bisexual.identity.pdf>. (19)

Week 3: Bisexual Visibility

- Answer reading questions to pass in next week.
- Remember, first reflection paper is due next class.

Maria Gurevich, Jo Bower, Cynthia M. Mathieson and Bramilee Dhayanandhan, “‘What Do They Look Like And Are They Among Us?’ Bisexuality, (Dis)Closure And (Un)viability,” in *Out In Psychology: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans And Queer Perspectives*, ed. Victoria Clarke and Elizabeth Peel (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 217-243. <http://www.ryersson.ca/~mgurevic/documents/Chapter11GurevichetalOIP2007.pdf> (26)

Karen Yescavage and Jonathan Alexander, “Bi/Visibility: A Call for a Critical Update.,” *Journal of Bisexuality* 1, no. 1 (2001): 173-181. (8)

Julie Ellen Hartman, “Chapter 5: (In)visibility and the Challenge to Bisexual Identities,” in *Bi Outside the Bedroom: The Performance of Bisexual Identity Among Women in “Heterosexual” Relationships*, PhD Dissertation, Michigan State University (2008), 120-141. (21)

Week 4: Bisexual Erasure

Kenji Yoshino, “The Epistemic Contract Of Bisexual Erasure.” *Stanford Law Review* 52, no.2 (January 2000): 353-452. (99)

Unit 2: Bisexual Politics

Week 5: Bisexual Feminism

Amber Ault, “Ambiguous Identity in an Unambiguous Sex/Gender Structure: The Case of Bisexual Women,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (Summer 1996) : 449-463. (14)

Shiela Jeffreys, “Bisexual Politics: A Superior Form of Feminism?” *Women’s Studies International Forum* 22, no. 3 (1999): 273-285. (12)

Clare Hemmings, “A Feminist Methodology of the Personal: Bisexual Experience and Feminist Post-Structuralist Epistemology,” in *Feminist Methodology : Gender Theory, Feminist Epistemology, Sex and Gender, Cross-Cultural Feminist Ethics, Politics of Gender, Ethnography of Gender*, ed. Subhadra Channa. (New Delhi, Cosmo, 2006), <http://orlando.women.it/cyberarchive/files/hemmings.htm>.

Elisabeth D. Daumer, “Extract from Queer Ethics, or, the Challenge of Bisexuality to Lesbian Ethics (1992),” in *Bisexuality: A Critical Reader*, ed. Merl Storr (New York: Routledge, 1999), 152-161. (9)

Amber Ault, “Hegemonic Discourse in an Oppositional Community: Lesbian Feminist Stigmatization of Bisexual Women,” in *Queer Studies: a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Anthology*, ed. Brett Beemyn and Mickey Elaison (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 204-216. (12)

Week 6: Bisexual Masculinities

Jo Eadie, "In Dialogue: Problems and Opportunities in Together Alone's Visions of Queer Masculinities," in *Bisexual Men in Culture and Society*, ed. Brett Beemyn (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 9-36. (27)

Lisa Frieden, "Invisible Lives: Addressing Black Male Bisexuality in the Novels of E. Lynn Harris," in *Bisexual Men in Culture and Society*, ed. Brett Beemyn (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 73-90. (17)

Mickey Eliason, "Bi-Negativity: The Stigma Facing Bisexual Men," *Journal of Bisexuality* 1, no. 2/3 (2001) 137-154. (17)

Week 7: Multiracial intersections

J. Fuji Collins, "The Intersection of Race and Bisexuality: A Critical Overview of the Literature and Past, Present, and Future.Preview," *Journal of Bisexuality* 4, no. 1/2 (2004): 99-116. (17)

Beverly Yuen Thompson, "Towards A Multicultural/Bisexual Theory," in *The Politics of Bisexual/Biracial Identity: A Study of Bisexual and Mixed Race Women of Asian/Pacific Islander Descent*. Thesis (1999), 12-32. (20) <http://www.snakegirl.net/PDF%20articles/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20FINAL%20BOOK%20bisexual%20biracial%20identity.pdf> (20)

Sari H. Dworkin, "Biracial, Bicultural, Bisexual: Bisexuality and Multiple Identities," *Journal of Bisexuality* 2, no. 4 (2002): 93-107. (15)

Week 8: Bisexual Research

- Remember, second reflection paper is due next class.

A. P. MacDonald, "Bisexuality: Research and Theory," *Journal of Homosexuality* 6, no. 3 (Spring 1981): 21-36. (15)

Tania Israel and Jonathan J. Mohr, "Attitudes Toward Bisexual Women and Men: Current Research, Future Directions," *Journal of Bisexuality* 4, no. 1/2, (2004): 117-134. (17)

Stephen T. Russell and Hinda Seif, "Bisexual Female Adolescents: A Critical Analysis of Past research, and Results from a National Survey," in *Bisexual Women in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Dawn Atkins (Binghamton: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 53-72. (19)

Unit 3: Bisexual Methodologies

Week 9: Bisexual Geographies

Clare Hemmings, "Locating Bisexual Identities: Discourses of Bisexuality and Contemporary Feminist Theory," in *Mapping Desire: Geographies of Sexuality*, ed. D. Bell & G. Valentine (New York: Routledge, 1995), 37-49. (12)

Kate O'Riordan, "Bisexual Spaces: A Geography Of Sexuality And Gender," *Feminist Review* 81, no. 1 (November 2005): 127-129. (2)

James McLean, "Daily Desires: Everyday Geographies of Bisexual Men," Masters Thesis, Simon Fraser University (2003): 17-25, 78-123 (53) <http://ir.lib.sfu.ca/bitstream/1892/9868/1/b34839823.pdf>

Week 7: Bisexual Deconstruction

Steven Angelides, "Beyond Sexuality," in *A History of Bisexuality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 190-207. (17)

Marjorie Garber, "Introduction," "Bisexuality and Celebrity," and "The Return to Biology," in *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Erotics of Everyday Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 13-34, 135-150, 268-283. (51)

Week 11: Bisexual Film Theory

- Remember, major paper is due next class.

Maria San Filippo, "The "Other" Dreamgirl: Female Bisexuality As The "Dark Secret" Of David Lynch's Mullholland Drive" *Journal of Bisexuality* 7, no. 1/2 (2007): 13-49. (36)

Jonathan David White,, "Bisexuals Who Kill: Hollywood's Bisexual Crimewave," in *Bisexual Men in Culture and Society*, ed. Brett Beemyn (New York: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 39-54. (15)

Maria San Filippo, "Bi-Epistemology in Practice: Reading Film Bisexuality/Bisexually," "Bisexual Sites on Screen" and "Bi-spectatorship: Seeing Between (and Beyond) the Lines," in *Having it Both Ways: Bisexualities/Bitextualities and Contemporary Crossover Cinema*, PhD Dissertation, University of California (2007), 47-77 (30)

Week 12: Liminality

Helene Cixous, "Extract from The Laugh of the Medusa (1975)," in *Bisexuality: A Critical Reader*, ed. Merl Storr (New York: Routledge, 1999), 189-192. (3)

Ann Kaloski, "Extract from Bisexuals Making Out With Cyborgs: Politics, Pleasure, Con/fusion (1977)," in *Bisexuality: A Critical Reader*, ed. Merl Storr (New York: Routledge, 1999), 201-210. (9)

Elizabeth Whitney, "Cyborgs Among Us: Performing Liminal States of Sexuality," in *Bisexual Women in the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Dawn Atkins (Binghamton: Harrington Park Press, 2002), 109-128. (19)