

English 820 Emphasis Area Seminar: Sade and Feminism

Ellen McCallum

emc@msu.edu

201B Morrill Hall

Office hours: Mondays 3-5pm & by appt.

This course is not for the faint-hearted: Donatien A. F. de Sade's writings are explicit, obscene, brutal, repetitive. But they raise compelling questions and offer challenging insights about gender and sexuality, power, knowledge, pleasure, friendship and other object relations, and enlightenment ideals.

The books listed below are only a portion of the required reading. In part this is because some books—Jane Gallop's *Intersections*, Lynda Hart's *Between the Body and the Flesh*—are out of print. But in part this is because of the nature of the seminar; participants should be pursuing additional readings as they develop their own line of inquiry. I am happy to talk with you about what directions you might take. As you look at the booklist, you may notice that there are a lot of writings by men. You may even be dismayed to think that there's not as much feminist theory as you'd hoped. This is not a course in feminist theory, per se, so much as a course in thinking from a feminist theoretical vantage: you are a good portion of the "and Feminism" in the course. This does not mean that you must be or become a feminist, but rather that you learn to employ a feminist framework for thinking and analysis.

Since this course is an emphasis area seminar, one of the main objectives is that participants should develop a research-length essay. To abet this process, the seminar will have two symposia, which are days completely turned over to your direction. The first symposium occurs midway through the semester. On that occasion, each student will have twenty minutes to do a conference-like presentation whose aim is to lay out a specific project or close reading of a text or set of questions that engages feminist critique or theory in relation to Sade, sadism, power, libertinage, reason and passion, sexuality, revolt, etc.—any of the core issues in the seminar. This presentation will be backed up by a bibliography of around fifty texts (books and articles), one fifth of which are to be annotated entries, to be handed in at the end of that meeting. This bibliography is expected to be the groundwork for your final research paper. The second symposium occurs at the end of the semester. You all will determine what happens on that day; my only stipulation is that it demonstrate intellectual work or accomplishment that is germane to the course but be distinct from the final research essay, from the previous symposium, and from the other class meetings. We can discuss as a class in advance of that session how to conduct it. (Some ideas include: presentations of your findings from the course in another medium than the written word; a second set of twenty-minute presentations on readings you've done outside of class assignments, perhaps from your bibliography; applying what you've learned to more contemporary examples.) In brief, merely reading your research papers to one another is right out, but picking up material from the cutting room floor is in.

Because Sade (and others on our list) wrote in French, I expect anyone who reads French, however minimally, to endeavor to read along in a French edition; there is one available online through the library's Eighteenth-century Collections Online (Gale). Think how it will expand your vocabulary!

Texts in Common:

Acker, Kathy. *Empire of Senseless*

---. *Pussy King of the Pirates*

---. "The Words to Say It" *Bodies of Work*

Barthes, Roland. *Sade/Fourier/Loyola*

Butler, Judith. *The Psychic Life of Power*

Carter, Angela. *The Sadeian Woman*

Deleuze, Gilles and Leopold von Sacher-Masoch. *Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty & Venus in Furs*

Freud, Sigmund. "A Child is Being Beaten" and First essay on the Theory of Sexuality in *The Psychology of Love* (Penguin Modern Classics)

Gallop, Jane, "The Student Body" and "The Female Body" Thinking through the Body
 ---. chapter on Klossowski, Intersections
 Klossowski, Pierre. Sade My Neighbor
 Kristeva, Julia. Powers of Horror
 Reage, Pauline. Story of O
 Rubin, Gayle. "The Leather Menace" from Coming to Power ed. SAMOIS collective
 Sacher-Masoch, Leopold von. Venus in Furs (alternate translation)
 Sade, Donatien Alphonse Francois, Marquis de. Justine, Philosophy in Boudoir, and other Writings

Requirements and grading:

Research essay 40%
 Symposium I 20%
 Bibliography 20%
 Symposium II 20%

Discussion is essential to this course, so come prepared to talk. I recommend you write up questions in advance to help guide our discussion. Understand that the deliberations should take the form of an open-ended, collaborative inquiry rather than a demonstration of one's command of the material—if you hit obstacles and opacities in the text, bring them to our collective attention to work through. Missing more than two classes will impair your grade by 0.25 per subsequent absence.

In conjunction with your reading, keep a reading register. Major themes, positions, key moves in the argument, images, words or phrases, convergences or divergences with other texts, as well as questions or ideas that you can use to synthesize your reading or develop your interpretation of these—that's the focus of a register. Start with a concise summary of the text (in a couple of sentences or so), and then elaborate by focusing on some aspect of the material that registers with you, something you find particularly engaging, useful, or problematic. Seriously undertaken, this resource can lay valuable groundwork for future study, including exams and longer research projects. You are welcome to consult with me about your register and your readings outside of class.

Syllabus

Sept. 8	Beauvoir, Must We Burn Sade?
15	Philosophy in Boudoir 1795; Gallop, chapters from Thinking through the Body
22	Justine 1791
29	Carter, Sadeian Woman; Freud, 1 st essay on the Theory of Sexuality & A Child is Being Beaten
Oct. 6	Barthes, Sade/Fourier/Loyola
13	Klossowski, Sade My Neighbor; Gallop, Intersections chapter
20	Kristeva, Powers of Horror; Rubin, The Leather Menace
27	SYMPOSIUM I: feminist directions
Nov. 3	Butler, Psychic Life of Power
10	Sacher-Masoch, Venus; Deleuze, "Coldness"
17	Reage, Story of O; Benjamin, Bonds of Love
24	Acker, Empire & "The Words to Say It"; Freud, Economic Problem of Masochism
Dec. 1	Acker, Pussy King of the Pirates
8	SYMPOSIUM II: further developments
15	Papers due this week