

Sex and Society in French Theory

French 393: Theories and Theorists

Professor Natania Meeker

Fall 2025

Monday, Wednesday: 12-1:20 PM

This class is taught **in English**. Students from all disciplines are welcome.



What is society? Why do we need it? And what does sex have to do with it? This class is designed as an introduction to post-war French and Francophone theory, with a focus on concepts of society as they implicate gender, sex, and sexuality. We will travel through queer and feminist theories as they both anticipate and react to the events of May '68 and, later, as they absorb and enrich theoretical and political currents from elsewhere—including the United States. At the same time, we will be interested in the way in which French post-war philosophers, psychoanalysts, and theorists more broadly rethink and revise concepts of society and the social body. What is the point of society and where does it come from? Whom does it serve and why? These questions will guide our explorations of the contributions of French and Francophone theory to the political, intellectual, and social life of what is sometimes known as late-late capitalism. Authors we will read will include: Baudrillard, Beauvoir, Bourcier, Cixous, Deleuze, Derrida, Dorlin, Foucault, Hocquenghem, Irigaray, Lévi-Strauss, Preciado, Vergès, and Wittig, among others.

This class is taught in English and all students are welcome to enroll. Knowledge of French is not required. It is an introduction to theoretical concepts and debates and has no prerequisites. It is aimed at any students seeking a better understanding of global discussions of the place of gender and sexuality in social life. If you have questions about the class, please contact Natania Meeker at nmeeker@usc.edu.