



APRIL 07

update

SYMPOSIUM PREVIEW BY GRACE KYUNGWON HONG

Strange Affinities

THE SEXUAL AND GENDER POLITICS OF COMPARATIVE
RACIALIZATION

ON APRIL 23, the Center for the Study of Women will present a one-panel symposium, entitled “Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization,” from 3 to 5 pm in 314 Royce Hall. Roderick Ferguson, Associate Professor of American Studies at the University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, will present “The Lateral Moves of African American Studies.” Ruby Tapia, Assistant Professor of Comparative Studies at Ohio State University, will present “Volumes of ‘Transnational’ Ven-

geance: Fixing Race and Feminism on the Way to Kill Bill.” Two UCLA professors, Rafael Perez-Torres of the Department of English and Russell Robinson of the Critical Race Studies program in the School of Law, will provide comment. This event is co-sponsored by the Asian American Studies Center, the Chicano Studies Research Center, the Women’s Studies Program, the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender Studies Program, the Asian American Studies Department, UC Humanities Research Institute, and the Critical Race Studies Program in the School of Law.

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DOES THIS BMI MAKE ME LOOK FAT?

*Defining the bounds of “normal” weight in the U.S. and France**Abigail C. Saguy*

Feminists have a long-standing interest in the social pressures put upon women to conform to narrowly defined and unrealistic body expectations (see Bordo 1993; Chernin 1985; Hesse-Biber 1996; Nichter 2000; Thompson 1994; Wolf 1991). In her classic book *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture and the Body* (1993; 130), Susan Bordo argues that “denying oneself food becomes the central micro-practice in the education of feminine restraint and containment of impulse.” The excruciating thinness of fashion models conveys a message that female beauty requires the denial of appetite, while advertisements for food

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Sciences From Below

FEMINIST AND POSTCOLONIAL STANDPOINTS

► How have recent feminist studies of modernity and tradition, along with postcolonial science and technology studies, produced new resources for thinking about gender, imperialism, and sciences?

SANDRA HARDING, with respondents FRANCOISE LIONNET (Professor, French & Francophone Studies) and SHARON TRAWEEK (Associate Professor, History)

SENIOR FACULTY FEMINIST SEMINAR SERIES: APRIL 18, 4 pm, Faculty Center

The scholars featured in this symposium are contributors to a collection of essays of the same title, co-edited by Roderick Ferguson and myself. To give some context for both this event and the edited volume around which it is organized, let me explain the intellectual and political rationale of this project. “Comparative racialization” in its most basic definition refers to scholarship that addresses African American, Asian American, Native American/indigenous and Chicana/o racializations as occurring in relation to each other. Yet this work does not merely articulate commonalities between communities of color but poses a more complex question about how a focus on differences between and within racialized groups might enable us to imagine alternative modes of coalition.

In this collective intellectual project, we turn to women of color feminism and queer of color critique as intellectual and political traditions for comparative methodologies directed toward understanding the important differences between racialized communities. In so doing, this project also highlights the comparative aspects of women of color feminism and queer of color critique that have been heretofore undertheorized. Women of color feminism and queer of color critique emerged out of the contradictions of racialized communities which are not monolithic nor unified, but always already differentiated. Women of color feminism and queer of color critique thus offer methodologies for understanding racialized communities as always constituted by a variety of racial, gendered, sexualized, and national differences. These intellectual traditions highlight the importance of an analysis that centers the *intersection* of race, gender, sexuality, and class, and thereby establishes a methodology for understanding coalition as emerging out of this difference. Accordingly, this panel and the edited collection from which it emerges centers gender and sexuality as important analytics for comparative race scholarship.

Roderick Ferguson’s presentation takes up women of color feminism as a comparative methodology in order to reimagine an African American studies organized not around a singular and monolithic narrative of enslavement, emancipation, and civil rights, but one that can take into account recent African migration to the United States. Ruby Tapia’s presentation implicates a form of “feminism” in neo-liberal erasures of racialized violence in her reading

of both parts of Quentin Tarantino’s “Kill Bill.” These two films, Tapia argues, “ironically” celebrates violence against racialized female subjects as a form of (white) female empowerment. I believe these presentations demonstrate the depth and range of contemporary comparative race work, and the far-reaching implications of this field.

In so doing, these scholars take up alternative modes of imagining coalition in order to advance new modes of comparative race analysis that situate contradiction and contestation as the basis for a collective anti-racist politics. Thus, these presentations do not merely take up “African American,” “Asian American,” “Chicano,” and so on as knowable and internally coherent, nationally based categories that can be compared. Rather, these presentations fundamentally question nationalist and identitarian principles and suggest new methodologies for understanding how such racial categories and the intersections between them can be defined. *Strange Affinities* advances out of an understanding that these racial formations are never uniformly produced but are internally contradictory and uneven.

The title, *Strange Affinities*, registers the complexity of comparative racializations. While creating and recognizing new modes of affinity is the purpose of this project, doing so means recognizing the strangeness at the heart of this enterprise. The scholarship collected in this volume will examine instances of what Angela Davis has termed “unlikely coalitions” across a variety of differentiated histories. In so doing, this scholarship suggests a methodology by which contradictions, conflicts, and disidentifications emerge as the ground on which cross-racial relations informed by anti-racist, feminist, and queer critiques are forged. This panel, I hope, will give a sense of the range and depth of scholarship that centers queer and feminist analysis within comparative race methodologies, and provide an opportunity for the CSW community to engage with this exciting line of inquiry.

GRACE KYUNGWON HONG graduated from UCLA with a B.A. in English and an M.A. in Asian American Studies. She received her Ph.D. in Literature at UC San Diego. She was an Assistant Professor at Princeton University and the University of Wisconsin at Madison. Hong joined the UCLA faculty as an Assistant Professor in the Department of Asian American Studies and the Program in Women’s Studies in 2005.