Agenda | 1. Administrative
2. *Discussion*: violating social norms
3. Social stigma
4. Queer theory

Synthesis essay 2

- Due **today** at **11:59pm**

A note on references/styles

- Essays do not need to comply with any formal style guides (e.g. cover pages are not necessary)
- Essays *should* use parenthetcial in-text citations and have a reference list at the end
- For a short essay, this usually means making sure the author and year are listed the first time a text is mentioned
  E.g. "Mahtani (2002) studies the experience of ..."
  (Subsequent metions of Mahtani would not typically need a year)
- When completing peer assessment, focus on the **existence and relevance of references** rather than their format.

Social norms often function as a form of social control, but the degree of enforcement is not always the same. Some norms are only loosely enforced, with violations occurring commonly. Others are treated more seriously can evoke extreme repercussions for those who break them.

1. *Individually*: Think of two examples of social norms, one that typically has minor consequences for violation (e.g. embarassment or short-therm exclusion) and another that has major consequences (e.g. regular harassment, social exclusion, or state-sponsored punishment)
2. *In pairs*: Discuss your examples and one of each type to post to the "Norms and norm violations" whiteboard on Teams.
3. *As a class*: We we will discuss the dynamics of some of these norm violations.
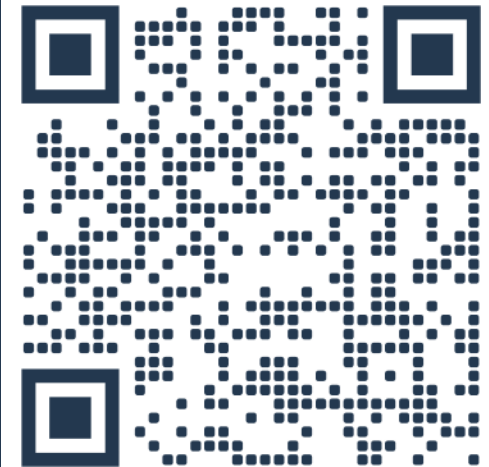
Social stigma
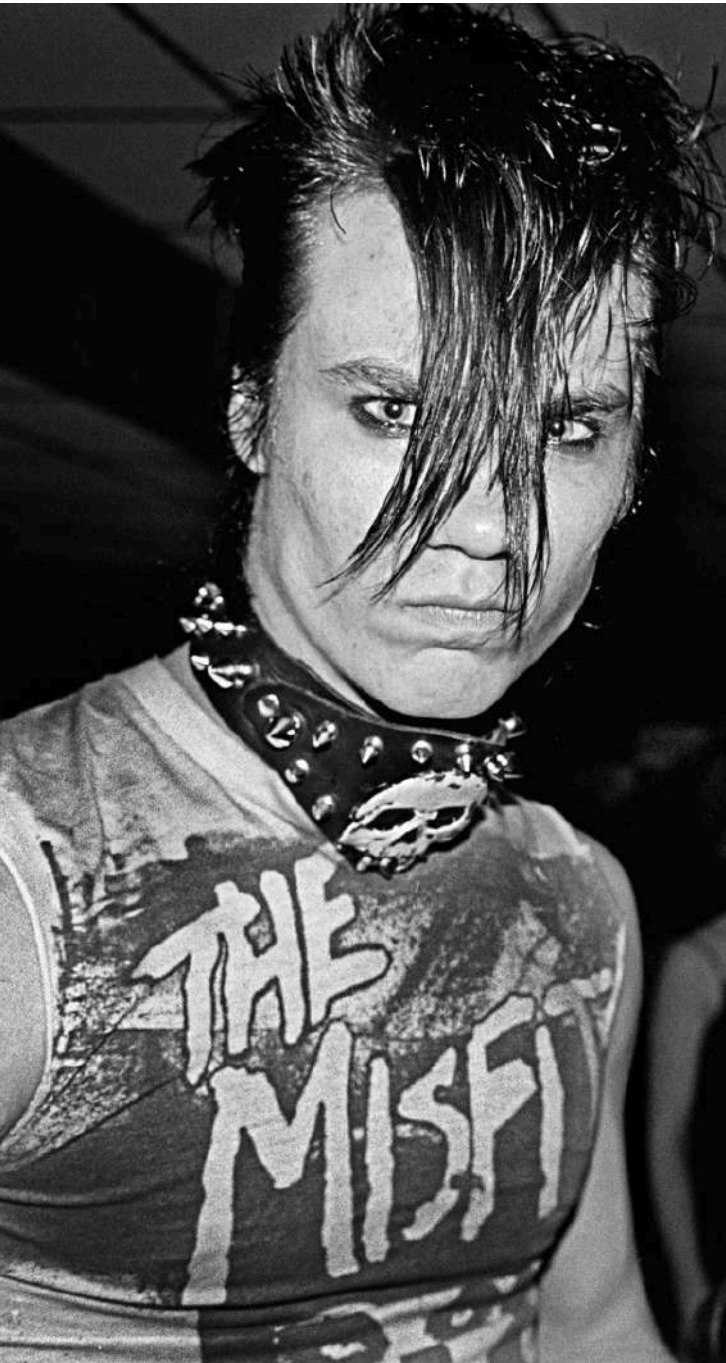
Violations of social norms

- Sociology of deviance is concerned with behavior that violates norms, or what is considered "acceptable"

- Rather than focus on stability of social expectations, sociology of deviance examines places where those expectations are transgressed

Types of deviance

- Deviant behavior is a very broad category
- Small violations that cause little more than mild discomfort
  e.g. standing "too close" to someone while talking with them
- Subcultural behavior that may be accepted within but not outside of a community

  e.g. Goth or Furry subcultures

- Taboo behavior that is socially 'forbidden'
  e.g. homicide, cannibalism, incest, arson, ...
  (though consider, e.g., death penalty, police/military violence, or deliberate property destruction by state)

"Spoiled identity"

⋮ Erving Goffman theorized stigma as a social process of labelling based on perceived difference

⋮ Based in interaction (negotiation) rather than any specific behavior/trait

⋮ Inability to make a credible claim to an 'acceptable' identity

Identity management

⋮ "Strategies" for managing stigmatized identities

⋮ *Covering*: hiding or downplaying stigmatized traits

⋮ *Flaunting*: highlighting a trait to challenge its stigmatization

Power dynamics

- Stigma management is tied to social power structures
- Those with more power are more easily able to manage stigma
- Economic capital can help with covering a stigmatized trait (e.g. healthcare, prosthetics, lawyers)
- Cultural and social capital can mitigate the negative effects of stigma, and may facilitate flaunting

Stigma is *intersectional*

- Stigma is *mediated* by social status
- E.g. alcohol consumption by a wealthy person versus an unhoused person
- E.g. multiple sexual partners for a man versus a woman
- **Intersecting identities of race, gender, class, disability, age, language, etc. determine the labelling and consequences of stigma**

Queer theory
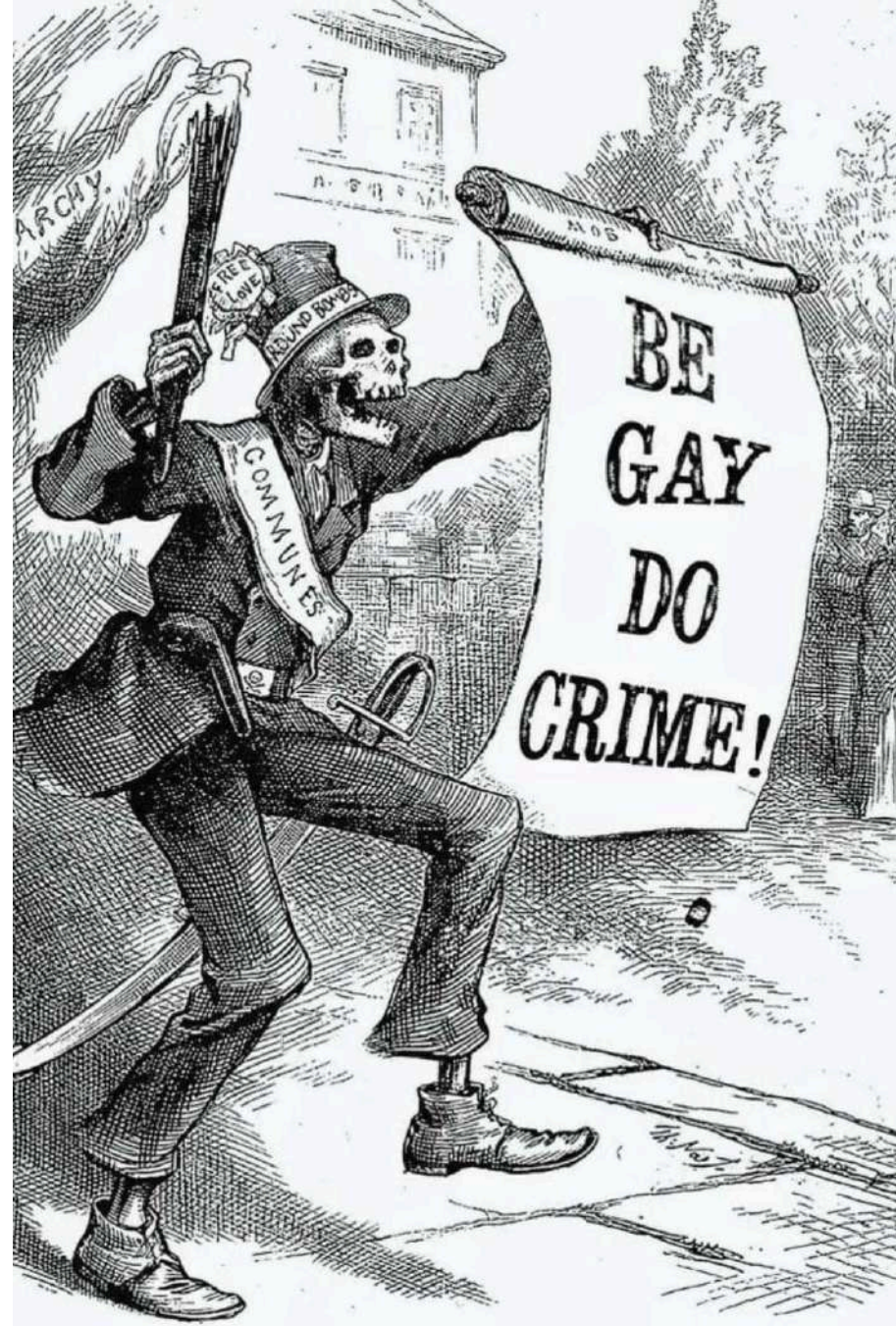
"Many blame queers for the decline of this society—we take pride in this.
...lieve that we intend to shred-to-bits this civilization and it's moral fabric—they couldn't be more...
We're often described as depraved, decadent and revolting—but oh, they ain't seen nothing yet!"

Queer theory (QT) "can be summarised as exploring the *oppressive power of dominant norms*, particularly those relating to sexuality, and the immiseration they cause to those who cannot, or do not wish to, live according to those norms. In analysing the power of 'the normal', QT contributes to a *politics and ethics of difference.*"

Nancy Harding (2011)

QUEER THEORY IN SOCIOLOGY

Interaction

- Emphasis on the social constructions of categories like gender and sexuality
- Dominant norms (heteronormativity) are negotiated and resisted in the day-to-day
- Importance of language & symbols in normative change

Conflict

- Normative categorical distinctions reinforce social inequalities
- Heteronormativity creates systemic oppression
- Active, organized, and persistent resistance is necessary to subvert normative structures

- *Sociology of deviance* examines how societal norms are constructed and *enforced*, and how those labels are used to *stigmatize* individuals and groups
- *Queer theory* emphasizes active *resistance* to societal norms and values, particularly through the defiance or *flaunting* of stigma
- Queer theory offers a *critical perspective* on the construction and enforcement of societal norms, emphasizing the importance of promoting social change and inclusivity
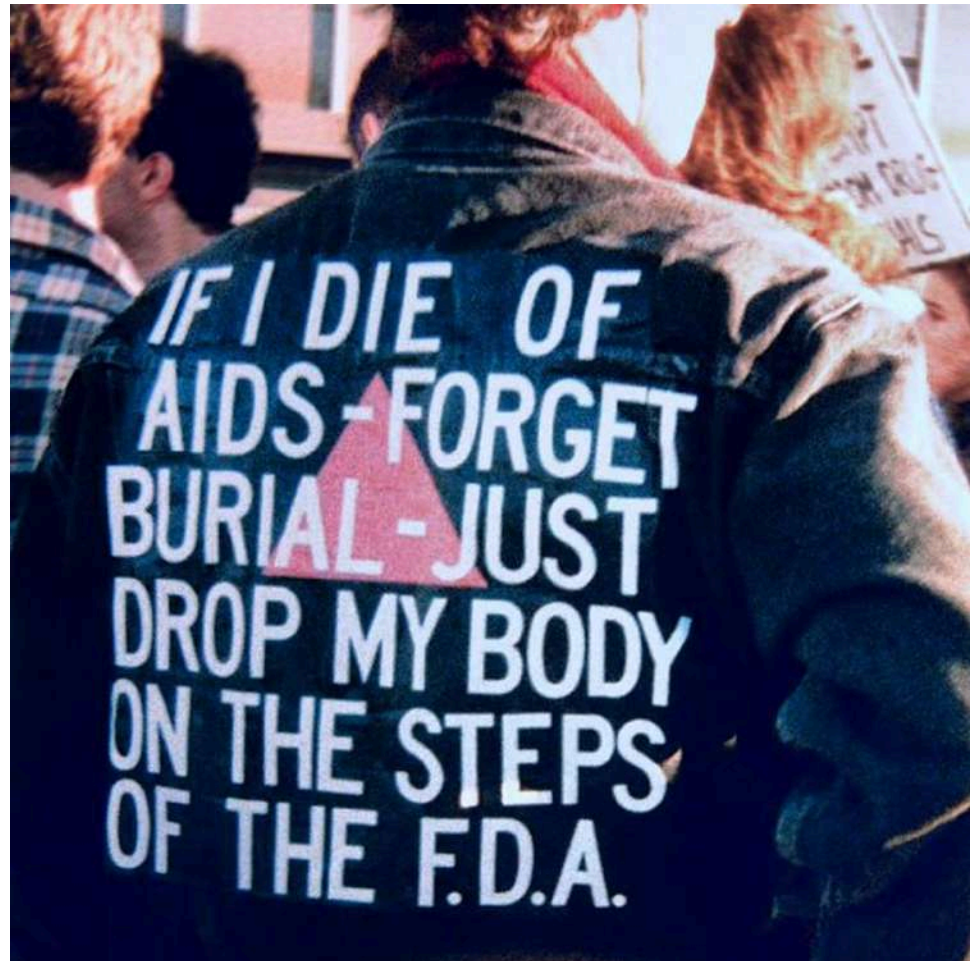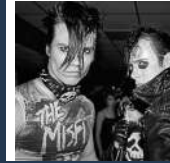
Image credit

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 The Misfits (1980) via thefoundimage.com

 Photo by i yunmai on Unsplash
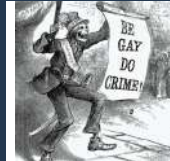
 Original art by Thomas Nast, alterations via Reddit

 Still from Pink Flamingos (1972)
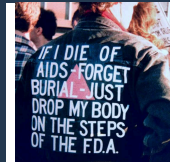
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