

English 140: Introduction to Gay and Lesbian Culture and Literature
Spring 2019

“I am not a lesbian, I just loved Thelma”

~ Djuna Barnes

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Classroom Location: Greenlaw 305
Class Meeting: MWF 9:05-9:55
Office Hours: M 10:00-12:00

Course Description:

This course is an introduction to LGBTQ+ literature and culture. We will use the word ‘queer’ as it has been deployed in recent academic and activist discourses to talk about people whose sexual and/or gender identity challenges heteronormative thinking. However, we will also investigate the genealogy of this term by examining different permutations of non-normative gender and sexual identity through the long 20th century. In doing so, we will consider the definition of ‘queer literature’ and its literary history, investigate overarching themes and discrepancies across the various texts, and examine how queer subjectivity intersects with various other modes of personal identity such as race, class, and gender. Though this course will have an overt emphasis on American literature and culture, we will also incorporate diverse forms of media from different cultures around the world to expand and challenge our notions of what ‘counts’ as queer literature and culture. We will also take a more historical approach as we move through the chronologically organized texts and trace the emergence of a modern queer identity in the West. Finally, while this is not a course in LGBTQ+ history or politics, we will make continual reference to both in our lectures and discussions and conclude by considering the contemporary issues that frequently emerge in queer artistic productions.

The target audience for this course includes anyone interested in learning more about queer literature and culture, American history, global queer media, feminist and queer theories of intersectionality, and contemporary queer politics and activism.

Course Goals & Learning Objectives:

- Understand the overarching themes, patterns, and motifs of queer literature
- Discern the many different permutations that ‘queer’ can take
- Delineate the differences in queer media given the author, socio-historical context, medium, etc.
- Trace changes and continuities in queer literature and culture throughout the 20th century and map these shifts to other prominent historical events
- Discuss how queer identity intersects and overlaps with other forms of personal identity

Required Texts:

- Djuna Barnes, *Nightwood* (1936)
- Carson McCullers, *Reflections in a Golden Eye* (1941)
- Truman Capote, *Other Voices, Other Rooms* (1948)
- James Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room* (1956)
- Alice Walker, *The Color Purple* (1982)
- Cherrie Moraga, *The Hungry Woman: A Mexican Medea* (1995)

- Alison Bechdel, *Fun Home: A Family Tragicomic* (2006)
- Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts* (2015)

All of the preceding texts should be available at the UNC student stores and can be directly accessed through this [link](#). If for some reason you are unable to procure them from the UNC bookstore, **you must still find copies before the reading is due in class**. Additionally, if you would like to support a local community bookstore, you may wish to pursue the following options:

- [The Regulator Bookshop](#) (Durham)
- [Flyleaf Books](#) (Chapel Hill)
- [McIntyre's Books](#) (Pittsboro)

Required Films¹

- Todd Haynes, *Carol* (2015)
- Ang Lee, *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)
- Céline Sciamma, *Tomboy* (2011)
- Barry Jenkins, *Moonlight* (2017)
- Dee Rees, *Pariab* (2011)
- Jennie Livingston, *Paris is Burning* (1990)
- Pedro Almodóvar, *Todo Sobre Mi Madre* (1999)

Course Assignments: Percentages & Descriptions

- Paper 1: 20%
- Paper 2: 20%
- Revision: 10%
- Presentation: 15%
- Participation: 10%
- Forum posts: 10%
- Final exam: 15%

Papers 1 & 2

Each essay will be 3-4 double spaced pages and will feature a close reading/literary analysis of a film or text (or both). You will be expected to make an argument about some element of the cultural text and provide extensive evidence drawn from the text to support your claims. Expectations, criteria, and due dates will be detailed in a separate handout.

Revision:

At the end of the semester, you will have the option to revise an old paper by incorporating new insights, writing techniques, and information from class. Guidelines for the revision paper will be delineated in a separate handout.

¹ No need to buy these! However, you must have viewed them by the time we are scheduled to discuss them in class

Presentation

Over the course of the semester, each of you will give a 6-8 minute presentation on a course reading/film of your choice. The presentation will be used to frame the ensuing discussion for that day and should touch on the broad themes of the text as well as your own specific interests and observations. Expectations/criteria will be detailed in a separate handout.

Participation

Your final course participation grade will be based on three central elements: attendance, discussion, and preparation:

Preparation: Preparation is not an abstract ideal but a series of concrete steps. Mark up your books: jot notes in the margin of the text, circle key words, look up words you do not know, scan interesting lines, brainstorm connections and questions. In other words, read actively, generating ideas for class discussion and your personal essays as you go. Adequate preparation means you can describe the situation, speaker, and basic argument for any given passage we cover in class; the basic plot and thematic developments in a segment of a novel or play; and the central cinematic devices and themes present in a film.

Discussion: Active discussion in this classroom is absolutely dependent on adequate preparation. Coming to class with your books thoroughly marked and ideas/questions ready will help facilitate a more stimulating and intellectually exciting learning environment and assist you in confidently articulating your thoughts to a diverse audience. Everyone has 'off' days here and there, but I expect you to be ready and contribute to class each period.

Attendance: You are permitted two absences, no questions asked, without penalty. Absences may be excused only with timely, official documentation from the appropriate university office (i.e, the Dean of Students or Athletics, not student health). For each subsequent absence, you will lose .5% from your class participation grade. If you miss class for any reason, you are not excused from the assignments due or completed during that class period. Additionally, bear in mind that class will start on time each day. Coming in late is disruptive & disrespectful to me and your class members. Habitual lateness will negatively impact your participation grade as will repeated absences.

Forum Posts:

Throughout the semester you must complete 10 forum posts (to be done at your discretion). Each post should be roughly between 250-500 words and offer your informal meditations on the assigned reading for that class period. Each post must be completed and uploaded to Sakai by midnight the night before class. I will then review the posts the morning before we convene and use your thoughts to shape our discussion for that day.

Final Exam:

The final exam will consist of 3 sections: analysis and identification of specific quotes, short answer questions, and a long essay. The final will be cumulative and will cover all texts and film discussed in class.

Grading Scale:

A (93-100); A- (90-92); B+ (87-89); B (83-86); B- (80-82); C+ (77-79); C (73-76); C- (70-72); D+ (67-69); D (63-66); D- (60-62); F (<60).

I will use traditional rounding to determine grades that fall between whole values. Any mixed number with a decimal value of five tenths or higher will round up to the next whole number. (For example, 92.5 will round up to an A as a 93, but 92.4 will not.)

Course Policies:Due Dates:

All papers and revisions are due at the beginning of class and must be submitted to the proper place on Sakai. All forum posts must be uploaded to Sakai by midnight the night before class.

Late Policy

All work must be submitted on time to the proper place on Sakai. Work not submitted at the specified time is considered late unless we made prior arrangements or unless there is an extreme extenuating circumstance (such as severe illness/injury or a family emergency). Computer or printer failure is not an excuse. Work will be accepted up to 4 days late (yes, weekends and holidays count), with a 10% per day late penalty.

Conferences/Email

I am generally easiest to reach electronically. My e-mail address is listed on the front of the syllabus and is also available through Sakai. I will respond to emails within 48 hours during the school week (M-F). Please refrain from e-mailing questions about an assignment due in fewer than 24 hours. Also, please do not send me drafts, homework, or any other attachments over e-mail unless I have specifically requested that you do so. If you would like more feedback, you should bring your draft to my office hours, listed on the first page of this syllabus.

Laptops in class

You will be asked to bring your laptop to class on occasion during the semester. On these days, you should only have your laptop open at the specified times, and if you are off-task during these times (on e-mail, on facebook, etc.), you will be marked absent for the day. **Laptops should not be used in class at other times unless needed for class readings.**

Classroom Environment

Creating a classroom environment that makes all students comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas is critical. To that end, each student is responsible for exercising tolerance and respect for a wide variety of ideas and healthy intellectual disagreement. Our University philosophy supports this position, which fosters intellectual growth.

Syllabus Changes:

The professor reserves to right to make changes to the syllabus, including project due dates and test dates. These changes will be announced as early as possible.

University Policies:

Honor Code: Our work in this class will conform to the principles and procedures defined in the *Instrument of Student Judicial Governance* (<http://instrument.unc.edu/>). The research that we do this semester, whether primary or secondary, print or online, formal or informal, will require careful documentation on your part to ensure that you are accurately citing all materials. We will review citation guidelines early and often throughout the semester and you will be responsible for reading and understanding the honor code as outlined in your Student Guide. You must cite your sources in all your work, including drafts as well as final versions of your feeders and projects. If I suspect you of plagiarizing all or part of an assignment, I am required to report the offense to the Honor Court.

Plagiarism: At UNC, plagiarism is defined as “the deliberate or reckless representation of another’s words, thoughts, or ideas as one’s own without attribution in connection with submission of academic work, whether graded or otherwise.” (*Instrument of Student Judicial Governance*, Section II.B.1.). Plagiarism consists of, but is not limited to, the intentional or even *inadvertent* submission of another’s work as your own. It is the student’s responsibility to be appraised of the UNC Honor Code and the proper methods for citation, paraphrasing, and synthesizing the words of others. I expect all the students in this course to have familiarized themselves with the university’s guidelines on plagiarism before handing in any piece of writing. Failure to adhere to, and respect this policy will result in your failing of this course and possible suspension from the university. Therefore, if you have any questions regarding the university policy or format, I invite you to bring those questions to my attention for clarification before you hand in any written work.

Students with Disabilities: UNC ensures that no qualified person shall by reason of a disability be denied access to, participation in, or the benefits of, any program or activity operated by the University. In compliance with UNC policy and federal law, qualified students with disabilities are eligible to receive “reasonable accommodations to ensure equal access to education opportunities, programs, and activities” (<http://www.unc.edu/depts/lds/faculty-policies.html>). If you anticipate such accommodations, please notify me as soon as possible. You may also seek out student support services through the Learning Center (<http://learningcenter.unc.edu/>) and at the Department of Accessibility and Resource Services (formerly known as the Department of Disability Services) (<https://accessibility.unc.edu/>). **Please note** that accommodations are not retroactive. However, as soon as you have obtained the proper documentation we can discuss accommodations accordingly.

Non-Discrimination Policy: The University is committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment and to ensuring that educational and employment decisions are based on individuals’ abilities and qualifications. Consistent with these principles and applicable laws, it is therefore the University’s policy not to discriminate on the basis of age, color, creed, disability, gender, gender expression, gender identity, genetic information, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation or veteran status as consistent with the University’s Policy on Prohibited Discrimination, Harassment and Related Misconduct. No person, on the basis of protected status, shall be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to unlawful discrimination, harassment, or retaliation under any University program or activity, including with respect to employment terms and conditions. Such a policy ensures that only relevant factors are considered and that equitable and consistent standards of conduct and performance are applied.

Semester Schedule

Wednesday, 1/9

Introductions, syllabus review, & assignment review

Friday, 1/11

Definitions, considerations of canon & history

Discuss guidelines for forum posts

Barnes, *Nightwood*: Preface & Introduction

Unit 1: From Sexual Diversity to the Binary: Tracing the Homo-Hetero Divide

Monday, 1/14

Historical/biographical contextualization

Discuss guidelines for presentations & sign-ups

Barnes, *Nightwood*: “Bow Down” to “Night Watch”

Wednesday, 1/16

Overview of sexology & psychoanalysis

Barnes, *Nightwood*: “The Squatter” to “Watchman, What of the Night?”

Friday, 1/18

Consider genre: high literary modernism

Barnes, *Nightwood*: “Where the Tree Falls”

Monday, 1/21

No class; Happy MLK day!

Wednesday, 1/23

Concluding thoughts on lesbian desire & relationships

Barnes, *Nightwood*: “Go Down, Matthew” to “The Possessed”

Friday, 1/25

Discuss guidelines for paper 1

Todd Haynes, *Carol* (2015)

Monday, 1/28

Overview of sexual subcultures/practices

McCullers, *Reflections*: Part 1 & 2

Wednesday, 1/30

Masculinity studies & feminist theory

McCullers, *Reflections*: Part 3

Friday, 2/1

Considerations of genre: Southern Gothic & the grotesque
McCullers, *Reflections*: Part 4

Monday, 2/4

Virtual Class; complete assignment on Sakai
Ang Lee, *Brokeback Mountain* (2005)

Wednesday, 2/6

Historical & biographical contextualization
Capote, *Other Voices*: Chapters 1 & 2

Friday, 2/8

Queer readings of novel
Capote, *Other Voices*: Chapters 3-5

Monday, 2/11

Introduction to female masculinity
Capote, *Other Voices*: Chapters 6-8

Wednesday, 2/13

Disability studies & the trope of the 'freak'
Capote, *Other Voices*: Chapters 9 to 11

Friday, 2/15

Céline Sciamma, *Tomboy* (2011)
Capote, *Other Voices*: Chapters 12-end

Unit 2: Queer of Color Critique: Intersections of Race, Gender and Sexuality

Monday, 2/18

Review unit parameters
Audre Lorde, "Age, Race, Class, and Sex: Women Redefining Difference"
Paper 1 due

Wednesday, 2/20

Historical & biographical background
Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*: pgs. 1-43

Friday, 2/22

Racialization in the novel

Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*: pgs. 44-71

Monday, 2/25

Gender & representations of masculinity

Baldwin, *Giovanni's Room*: pgs. 75-118

Wednesday, 2/27

Closing thoughts on Baldwin

Barry Jenkins, *Moonlight* (2017)

Friday, 2/29

Historical & biographical background

Walker, *The Color Purple*: pgs. 1-66

Monday, 3/4

Black mothering/motherhood

Walker, *The Color Purple*: pgs. 67-125

Wednesday, 3/6

Post-colonialism & feminism/womanism

Walker, *The Color Purple*: pgs. 126-177

Friday, 3/8

Black masculinity

Walker, *The Color Purple*: pgs. 178-214

*****Spring Break*****

Monday, 3/18

Walker & black women's writing

Walker, *The Color Purple*: pgs. 215-end

Wednesday, 3/20

Dee Rees, *Pariah* (2011)

Friday, 3/22

Biographical background & context

Moraga, *The Hungry Woman*: Foreword-Act II

Monday, 3/25

Introduction to Chicana feminism

Moraga, *The Hungry Woman*: Act II (pgs. 55-75)

Paper 2 due

Wednesday, 3/27

Medea & the monstrous mother

Moraga, *The Hungry Woman*: Act II (pgs. 76-100)

Friday, 3/29

Closing thoughts on Moraga

Ocean Vuong, [“On Earth We’re Briefly Gorgeous”](#)

Unit 3: Expanding Queer: Trans*, Gender Non-Conforming & Alternative Desires

Monday, 4/1

Introduction to Bechdel’s biography

Bechdel, *Fun Home*: Chapters 1-2

Wednesday, 4/3

Intertextuality

Bechdel, *Fun Home*: Chapters 3-4

Friday, 4/5

Intertextuality continued

Bechdel, *Fun Home*: Chapter 4-5

Monday, 4/8

Consider genre: the graphic novel

Bechdel, *Fun Home*: Chapters 6-7

Wednesday, 4/10

Brief discussion of adaptation

Jennie Livingston, *Paris is Burning* (1990)

Friday, 4/12

Introduction to Nelson & discussion of form

Nelson, *The Argonauts*: 1-36

Monday, 4/15

Overview of feminist psychoanalysis

Nelson, *The Argonauts*: 37-70

Wednesday, 4/17

Homo/hetero-normativity & the queer family
Nelson, *The Argonauts*: 71-100

Friday, 4/19

No class!

Monday, 4/22

Overview of transgender studies
Nelson, *The Argonauts*: 101-end

Wednesday, 4/24

Pedro Almodóvar, *Todo Sobre Mi Madre* (1999)

Friday, 4/26

Course wrap-up

Revision of Paper 1 or Paper 2 due

*****final exam date and time tbd by the Registrar*****